

# MUSEUMS AND CITIZENSHIP: A RESOURCE BOOK

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## Preface

Questions regarding the relations between culture and citizenship currently enjoy a position of some prominence in the agendas of Australian political and policy debate. It is no accident that the preamble to the Commonwealth's 1994 cultural policy statement *Creative Nation* should have included a citizens' charter of cultural rights recommending that all Australians should be guaranteed:

- 1, the right to an education that develops individual creativity and appreciation of the creativity of others;
- 2, the right of access to our intellectual and cultural heritage;
- 3, the right to new intellectual and artistic works; and
- 4, the right to community participation in cultural and intellectual life. (Commonwealth of Australia, 1994: 2)

It is no accident either that, in outlining the relations between the government's cultural responsibilities and its responsibility for the maintenance of democratic political traditions and values, *Creative Nation* situated its concerns alongside those of the Civic Experts Group appointed, also in 1994, to explore ways of promoting a broader civic involvement in Australian political life.

Whenever culture is at issue within policy debates, then, questions of citizenship are usually also involved. Within these general concerns, issues to do specifically with the civic roles and functions of museums have been very much to the fore. As a consequence, the past decade has witnessed a number of important colloquia, conferences and commissioned reports which have addressed aspects of the new civic responsibilities museums are increasingly being asked to assume. These have also been occasions for exploring the ways in which the practices and policies of museums might need to be adjusted if they are to respond adequately to these changing requirements. The *Extending Parameters Forum* organised by the Australia Council and the Queensland Art Gallery in 1990 explored ways of making art galleries more accessible and responsive to the needs of a more diverse range of communities (Australia Council, 1990). A couple of years earlier the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the Victorian Ministry for the Arts organised a conference to explore how collecting institutions might better serve the needs of multicultural Australia (Birtley & McQueen, 1989). The report commissioned by the National Museum of Australia to develop a philosophy to guide both its collecting and interpretative practices addressed similar concerns (Zubrzycki, 1992). More recently, in 1994, the National Museum of Australia organised a conference to discuss how museums might more adequately represent women's interests and culture as well as involving women more effectively in museum work and decision making.

A year earlier, in June 1993, the National Museum of Australia hosted a forum, organised as a part of the *Ideas for Australia* program, to debate how Australian culture is, and how it should be, portrayed in museums and other collecting institutions. In the discussion paper arising from this forum, Penelope Layland and Donald Horne offered the following summary of the relations between museums and citizens:

If Australians are to see themselves as citizens of their own society they need to show an interest in that society. You cannot be a very good citizen if you do not take an intelligent interest in the place you are a citizen of.

In this, museums and other collecting and exhibiting institutions can play a unique role in Australia's cultural development by encouraging Australians to develop a greater awareness of their social, cultural and natural environment as part of their capacity for citizenship. They can do this if they accept the responsibility for doing so, if they present their material with the imagination and flair that can ensure visitors enter into a cultural engagement with what they see and do not just stand in front of it, and if governments and other organisations which support museums recognise that this is one of their civic tasks. (Layland & Horne, 1993: 5).

This passage identifies a network of interacting obligations: of governments to museums; of museums to citizens; and of citizens to the wider society. That these matters should be widely debated in contemporary Australia is hardly surprising. The changing social composition of the Australian citizenry — partly through migration and, since 1967, through the acquisition of citizen rights and status by Australia's Koori peoples — has entailed that museums broaden their conception of the citizenry they are appointed to serve. The demands made by women's movements for a stronger recognition of women's cultural rights have had similar consequences. So, too, have the debates occasioned by the view of Australia as a postcolonial society which, in the view of an increasingly



influential body of opinion, might need to become a republic in order to achieve full political sovereignty. All of these factors have played a role in revising our sense of how the rights, duties and obligations of museums, citizens and governments need to be thought of in relation to one another.

In these ways, then, many of the issues that are posed in current Australian debates regarding the relations between museums and citizenship arise from considerations that are local and circumstantial. They are the product of specifically Australian conditions and developments. Yet others are not. For similar tendencies of social and cultural change have meant that there has been a world-wide tendency for the civic roles and responsibilities of museums to be reviewed in order to identify how and where their existing practices might need to be changed if they are to respond appropriately to a new set of civic tasks and responsibilities. The specific factors prompting such reviews, moreover, have often had much in common with those obtaining in Australia. An acknowledgment of the need for museums to recognise the distinctive cultural rights of First Peoples has been a driving force for museum reform in Canada and New Zealand as well as Australia, while the political and policy agendas of multiculturalism have played a significant role in developing new museum practices and priorities in the United States. The role of the women's movement in prompting both a critique of existing museum practices and the development of new ones which recognise the need to accord an equality of rights and status to women in all aspects of museum affairs has similarly been an international one, albeit that these issues have often been posed in distinctive ways in different national contexts.

The purpose of this volume, then, is to offer a review and synthesis of the main developments that have affected Australian understandings of the relations between museums and citizenship over the past twenty years or so. It does so by considering the specifically Australian conditions and circumstances that have borne on these developments while also placing these in the context of broader international debates and policy developments. Of course, we have not sought to provide an exhaustive account of the changing conceptions and practices of museums that have been developed over this period. Instead, the study is organised around what have been the four main policy areas bearing on the citizenship functions of museums.

In Chapter 2, Robin Trotter considers the respects in which museums have been criticised for their failure to accord women equal civic rights and status with men. Her discussion encompasses the shortcomings of the ways in which women's lives, activities, cultures and values have — at least until recently — typically been portrayed in museum exhibits. Where these have not been simply neglected, Trotter argues, stereotypical views of gender have too often governed the aspects of women's lives which museums have paid attention to. However, Trotter then moves on to consider a range of the measures which museums have implemented in order to make museums more adequately responsive to women's cultural needs and interests. Her discussion of such matters ranges widely across measures developed to ensure more gender-sensitive collection and exhibition practices, affirmative-action programs in the employment policies of museums as well as the emergence of specialised women's museums. While concentrating her attention mainly on Australia, Trotter also reviews recent developments in Europe and North America to help identify the patterns of 'best practice' that are emerging internationally.

The same is true of Chapter 3 where Trotter draws particularly on the experience of black museums in the United States to provide a comparative context for her review of the shift 'from monoculture to multicultural' in Australian museums. This includes a consideration of the respects in which earlier museum collecting and exhibition policies have been criticised for their implicit — and, in many cases, explicit — Anglo-Celtic bias. However, Trotter is more concerned to trace the ways in which the development of the policy agendas of multiculturalism has helped prompt new museum priorities concerned to ensure a more adequate representation of Australian cultural diversity. As she shows, this has affected all levels of museum activity and decision making, from collections management through to the exhibition and research functions of museums. Perhaps the most distinctive new developments, however, have been the new kinds of partnerships that have developed between a range of Australia's museums and specific ethnic community associations in the development and management of new and innovative programs.

One of the more challenging issues emerging from Trotter's discussion in these two chapters concerns the tensions which exist between different aspects of the civic roles museums are called on to play in modern societies. The demand that, on the one hand, different groups in the community should be able to see their culture and values enshrined in the museum may be in conflict with what



some would see as an equally binding responsibility of the museum: to probe the blind-spots and limitations of the different cultures it exhibits. This may result in museums being placed in contradictory situations in which they cannot satisfy one set of civic claims except at the expense of seeming to fail in their obligations to other claimants. The portrayal of Islamic cultures might thus be thought to imply support for patriarchal values of a kind that would render museums liable to feminist critique. However, this is merely one example of a more general problem regarding the, at times, inherently contradictory cultural rights that public cultural institutions have to find some way of mediating.

In Australia, issues of this kind are most compellingly to the fore in the debates, policies and practices through which the relations between Australian museums and Aboriginal Australians are being slowly, but inexorably, changed. These are the issues Donna McAlear examines in Chapter 4. In doing so, she introduces a new set of analytical, political and policy perspectives on the relations between museums and citizenship. Of course, there are some respects in which First Peoples' criticisms of museums have paralleled the criticisms emerging from the women's movement. This is true of the negative assessment they have offered of the ways in which First Peoples and their cultures have habitually been represented in museum displays as either backward 'primitives' or a romanticised exotica. However, First Peoples' criticisms have also raised more distinctive and challenging problems bearing on the ownership and administration of cultural property. The demand that Aboriginal remains and artefacts held in museums should be repatriated to traditional or new forms of Aboriginal custodianship, such as keeping places, with, in sensitive areas, rights of cultural access being restricted to particular categories of Aborigines: these forcibly-pressed claims have questioned the right of the state to own and administer cultural property on behalf of an undifferentiated public. In doing so, they have fashioned new concepts of cultural rights based on the principles of Aboriginal autonomy and difference which have placed limits on the assumption — derived mainly from European concepts of citizenship — that citizenship rights should be equal and universal in the sense of applying identically to all citizens. McAlear examines changing practices and policies in both Australia and Canada with a view to identifying the respects in which these two postcolonial societies might learn from one another in the related, but still distinct, ways in which their museum policies and practices have been adjusted in belated recognition of the distinctive cultures, traditions and social organisations of their indigenous populations.

In Chapter 5, Trotter turns our attention to issues which span the concerns of the previous three chapters. For perhaps the most important general principles which have borne on recent understandings of the relations between museums and citizenship have been those of equity of access and participation. The issues here are complex. For what is asserted in such principles is, of course, the right to an equality of opportunity for all members of society to access the resources of museums and to participate in their affairs. Yet such an equality of opportunity depends, in good measure, on equalising the distribution of those cultural skills and interests which permit full cultural and intellectual access to museums. These are issues which concern the education system just as much as they do museums. Robin Trotter restricts her attention to the kinds of initiatives that museums have taken in attempting to dismantle the barriers which might impede their use by a diverse public. These include new kinds of community involvement in museum management and exhibition planning, the use of new information technologies to improve access to the research and data sources of museums and, in some cases, experiments with new types of museums.

As a prelude to the specific concerns of each of these chapters, Chapter 1 provides a historical overview of the development of the museum form. This overview is particularly concerned to trace the different ways in which the civic roles and functions of museums have been understood at different points in time and different places. It includes a brief sketch of the development of Australian museums, and of the conceptions and values of citizenship which have informed their development from their foundations through to the present. In these regards, Chapter 1 provides a theoretical context for, and historical background to, the more specific and contemporary concerns of each of the following chapters.

If there is one thing to be learned from these it is that a citizens' charter of cultural rights of the kind proposed in the preamble to *Creative Nation* is one thing, and that putting such rights into effect is another. The high-minded sentiment of the former comes easily. The latter involves a highly specific and differentiated administrative attention to detail. The purpose of this project has been to contribute to that task by facilitating a sharing of what we hope will prove to be useful information. Our purpose

has not been to write academic essays on different facets of the relations between museums and citizenship. Rather, the style we have aimed for is that of a user's manual — a resource book which will offer museum workers, critics, and visitors alike a quick and convenient way of both finding out about and following up on those particular areas of debate and practice that interest them.

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## CHAPTER 1

### THE MUSEUM AND THE CITIZEN

TONY BENNETT

Museums are complex, many-sided institutions which serve the communities in which they are located in a number of ways. One of the things they do, Michael Frisch has suggested, is to 'offer to citizens, visitors, and school children ... a "civic presentation of self"' (Frisch, 1989: 38). They offer a public and official version of history — and it might be the history of a city, nation or state — through which a particular set of meanings is organised. What does it mean to be an Australian? Or a Queenslander? Or a Sydneysider? Museums offer answers to questions like these, sometimes explicitly and sometimes implicitly. In doing so, they provide a set of resources through which important questions bearing on our roles, identities and rights as citizens can be posed and debated.

These resources may be used in a variety of ways depending on the circumstances and contexts in which museums are visited. Some of these uses may be highly formalised. One of the main examples that Frisch draws on to illustrate the kinds of 'municipal self-portraiture' that museums of urban history can offer is the Museum of the City of New York. When I visited this museum in 1994 its role in cultivating civic identity was evident from the number of school parties using the museum displays as props for communicating a sense of local historical identity. In the lessons on which I eavesdropped, teachers used reconstructions of the interiors of wealthy New Yorkers' 17th - 19th century homes for question-and-answer sessions designed to show both how life in the city had changed and how, beneath the changes, the city had remained the same place with a culture and a history shared by all its inhabitants. More typically, it is left to the visitor to draw such connections on the basis of the objects displayed, the accompanying text, and the issues highlighted in guidebooks.

Whatever the context of the visit, however, it is also clear that the kind of 'civic presentation of self' that museums offer is liable to considerable fluctuation and variation. What should appropriately be included in such civic presentations of self? To whom should such presentations be addressed? In 1994, the 'Pride Equals Power' display at the Museum of the City of New York addressed such questions in encompassing New

York's gay community within its 'civic presentation of self'. The display celebrated a succession of gay and lesbian public demonstrations from the Stonewall Rebellion of 1969, perhaps the most important founding moment in New York's gay movement, through to the Lesbian and Gay Pride Weeks of the 1990s.

On the other side of Central Park, however, the American Museum of Natural History, whose masculinism has been discussed by Donna Haraway (1992), offers a reminder of a period when museums addressed a citizenry conceived in more singular terms. The 1936 dedication in the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial envisages the citizen as male and heterosexual in the itinerary that it plots from youth to manhood.

#### YOUTH

I WANT TO SEE YOU GAME BOYS  
I WANT TO SEE YOU BRAVE AND MANLY  
AND I ALSO WANT TO SEE YOU GENTLE  
AND TENDER

BE PRACTICAL AS WELL AS GENEROUS  
IN YOUR IDEALS KEEP YOUR EYES  
ON THE STARS AND KEEP YOUR FEET  
ON THE GROUND

COURAGE HARD WORK SELF MASTERY  
AND INTELLIGENT EFFORT ARE ALL  
ESSENTIAL TO A SUCCESSFUL LIFE

CHARACTER IN THE LONG RUN  
IS THE DECISIVE FACTOR IN THE LIFE  
OF AN INDIVIDUAL AND OF NATIONS ALIKE

#### MANHOOD

A MANS USEFULNESS DEPENDS  
UPON HIS LIVING UP TO HIS IDEALS  
INSOFAR AS HE CAN

IT IS HARD TO FAIL BUT IT  
IS WORSE NEVER TO HAVE TRIED  
TO SUCCEED  
ALL DARING AND COURAGE  
ALL IRON ENDURANCE OF MISFORTUNE  
MAKE FOR A NOBLER TYPE  
OF MANHOOD



ONLY THOSE ARE FIT TO LIVE  
WHO DO NOT FEAR TO DIE AND NONE  
ARE FIT TO DIE WHO HAVE SHRUNK  
FROM THE JOY OF LIFE AND THE  
DUTY OF LIFE

Its particular construction of the relations between masculinity and citizenship to one side, this text serves as a timely reminder that, for much of their history, museums have not included women among the citizens they have addressed. Either that or they have not accorded them the same cultural rights and status as men. This is one of the groups which museums have under-represented among the citizens whose cultural needs they are to serve. Colonised indigenous populations; migrant black peoples; men and women without property; non-heterosexual men and women are among the groups which, at various points over the past two hundred years, have not been accorded equal citizenship rights and status in either the practice or the governance of museums.

Viewed against this background, an important development of the past twenty years or so is the more inclusive concept of citizenship which now — at least in theory — governs the practices and policies of museums. The three main requirements now typically placed on museums in this regard are:

- 1, That they should portray the cultures of all sections of society;
- 2, That they should make themselves equally accessible to different ethnic groups, classes, and genders; and
- 3, That their governance should reflect the make-up of society in these regards.

Yet an equally important tendency has been the recognition that museums may legitimately offer 'civic presentations of self' in relation to communities which lay claim to cultural identities and rights which are distinct from those of a national or territorially-defined citizenry.

A few blocks south of the Museum of the City of New York, the Jewish Museum offers a quite different 'civic presentation of self'; one concerned with the organisation and maintenance of a transnational identity for a diasporic community. The orientation text for the main display makes its purpose clear enough:

*Culture and Continuity* proposes that Jews have been able to sustain their culture, despite wide dispersion and sometimes tragic circumstances, by evolving a culture that was adaptable to life in many countries and under various conditions. The exhibition examines the dynamic interaction between continuity and change: the Jewish people's ability to revise tradition and recast

identity from antiquity to the present, while holding fast to a set of fundamental concepts and values.

In its portrayal of the diasporic dispersal of Jewish peoples, and, in the modern period, of the complex interplay between their national civic roles and identities and the maintenance of their distinctively Jewish roles and identities, the display probes the relations between nationalist conceptions of civic identity based on the exercise of sovereignty over a bounded territory and diasporic constructions of a civic role and ethos in ways which complicate any simple limitation of the civic roles of museums to the question of the part they play in the formation of national cultural identities.

The point is reinforced by walking north from the Jewish Museum to El Museo del Barrio, concerned with organising a sense of transnational Latino identity. Carry on north into Harlem, to the Museum of the American Indian, where the empty display cases describing the objects once exhibited there, but since removed at the insistence of their tribal owners, give eloquent testimony to the claims to cultural autonomy of First Peoples.

In the space of just a few blocks within the same city we find quite different conceptions of the relations between museums and citizens, and quite different conceptions of the kinds of civic selves which museums should seek to portray and fashion. Although not so conveniently placed within walking distance of one another, the same range and variety of museum practices is evident in Australia. The development of specific ethnic museums, like the Jewish Museums in Melbourne and Sydney; of museums like the Migration Museum in South Australia specifically committed to hybrid constructions of civic identity; of Aboriginal keeping places; of museums like the Women's Hut, concerned exclusively with women's issues and culture: it is clear from all these developments that Australian museums now play a highly varied and pluralised role in relation to processes of citizenship formation. The citizen they seek to cultivate is not cast in a single image, and there is no single prevailing concept of civic self-fashioning they should help to foster and promote.

General principles regarding the civic role of museums that would recruit more or less universal support in modern western societies are:

- 1, The museum should be the collective public property of a citizenry, administered for the public good in ways which ensure that it is accountable to the democratically elected representatives of that citizenry;

2, All citizens should have equal rights of access to museums and to the information they contain;

3, Museums should foster civic identity and belonging on the part of all members of society; and

4, The cultures, beliefs, and ways of life of all groups within a society should be represented within museums, and be accorded equal worth and value.

These ideas apply just as much to the relations between a local museum and the citizens of the locality concerned as they do to national museums. They also apply, with different degrees and kinds of stress and emphasis, to all museum types, including museums of natural history. However, as we have also suggested, these principles are not natural to the museum. To the contrary, they have developed gradually over the past two hundred years. A brief survey of the changing conceptions of the relations between museums and citizens will thus establish an appropriate historical context for consideration of the ways in which these principles inform contemporary museum practices and policies.

Since the museum is an imported European form, and since the view that there is an important relationship between museums and citizenship is essentially European in origin, we look first at the European development of museums to identify how this influenced early Australian museum debates and practices. More recent developments within Australia, however, show how those European ideas are now being revised in adjusting museum practices to take account of differentiated cultural rights, especially those of Aboriginal Australians, in ways which limit the cultural sovereignty of national citizenries and, in their place, recognise rights based on other principles.

#### MUSEUMS AND CITIZENSHIP: CHANGING CONCEPTIONS

##### MUSEUMS AND CIVIC CULTURE

Convention attributes the genesis of the first three principles summarised above to policies developed for the administration of the Louvre during the French Revolution. This is only a partial truth. Some of these ideas had been 'in the air' throughout the latter part of the 18th century. The view that museums should be used to promote a sense of civic identity, for example, had been current throughout most of the 18th century. Indeed, it was this concept that was

responsible for a number of royal collections of art being opened to the public to inculcate a sense of identity with, and loyalty toward, the nation. The Austrian Hapsburgs who, in 1776, opened the *Gemaldagalerie* in the Belvedere Palace to the public, thus laying the foundations for what was to become Vienna's *Kunsthistorisches Museum* (Kaufmann, 1994). Similar proposals had been made in relation to the Louvre from as early as 1747 and, by 1778, a commission had been established to advise on opening the grand gallery of the Louvre as a public museum (Pommier, 1989). When, in 1789, the Louvre was seized in the name of the people and when later, in 1793, it was opened to the public, the result was thus anything but a complete break with the past. In effect, policies that had been in place for using royal art-treasures as a means of cultivating a national civic identity in which the nation was defined as the monarch's realm were redeployed to promote a civic identity in which the nation was defined as the territory of a republican citizenry.

Policies developed in relation to the Louvre and other museums in the French Revolution brought together three of the modern principles regarding the civic role of museums and crystallised these in ways that had not been true before.

These might conveniently be summarised as follows:

1, The seizure of the Louvre in the name of the people and the extensive debates regarding appropriate forms for its democratic governance enunciated new principles for the ownership and administration of cultural property;

2, New principles of public access were also established by opening the Louvre to the public, without let or restriction, for a set number of days a week; and

3, In interpreting the art contained in the Louvre as a testimony to the greatness and glory of the French state and people, rather than of the monarch, cultural resources were used in new ways to promote a degree of self-consciousness among and for a citizenry defining itself in new, democratic terms. The nation which the art on display now made manifest was not 'the nation as the king's realm' but 'the nation as the state — an abstract entity in theory belonging to the people' (Duncan & Wallach, 1980: 454).

Similar policies were developed in relation to administration of national monuments, especially in support Alexandre Lenoir received in protecting such monuments from revolutionary vandalism and collecting them in the *Musée*

*d'antiquités et monuments français* (Vidler, 1989).

It is equally important to be clear about the limitations which characterised museum policies developed in the revolutionary era. These related principally to women. While included among those admitted to the Louvre and allowed to sketch there, this was about as far as women's rights in the cultural sphere extended. Although they had been active and often leading participants in the major political events of the French Revolution, there soon followed a radical curtailment of women's civic rights (Landes, 1988). Women thus played little, if any, role in the governance of museums which addressed themselves mainly to the task of forming a republican brotherhood. Pommier suggested that, like the Pantheon, the Louvre remained a 'sanctuary of the example', a place for embodying and representing exemplary civic virtues through the portrayal of model deeds, exploits and individuals. The symbolic coinage it drew on was — again, like that of the Pantheon — overwhelmingly masculine. Women were not recruited for the new forms of civic republican identity museums sought to fashion. Except for the portrayal of Liberty as a woman, women were also not accorded an especially important role in representing the civic virtues that the visitor was meant to emulate. This ascription of second-rate civic rights to women has remained a central limitation of the museum throughout much of the 19th and 20th century.

The example of the Louvre was widely followed throughout provincial France (Sherman, 1989) as well as in many of the countries brought under French rule as a result of the Napoleonic conquests (Bazin, 1967). This helped both to develop and to disseminate the first three of the new principles regarding the civic role of museums outlined above. In some contexts, however, these ideas were often opposed because of their association with the French Revolution.

#### THE 'MUSEUM IDEA'

This was especially true of Britain where campaigns to open the major state collecting institutions to the public and make their administration more democratically accountable were successfully resisted by conservative forces until well into the 19th century. There are a number of reasons for this:

1, Those responsible for the administration of the most prestigious collecting institutions reacted negatively to the French experience of

public access. Sir Anthony Pannizzi, Principal Librarian at the British Museum, argued that opening the French National Library to the public had only resulted in the admission of

... downright idlers, mostly, and persons influenced by political excitement, who go to read books which very few people read here; they read books on politics and on religion, and such topics; when I say religion, I do not mean for religion, but against it ... (Report, 1850, Minute 747).

Even worse, it seems, ladies had developed a habit of coming to read at the British Museum and this alone, Pannizzi argued, formed

a great objection to admitting everybody indiscriminately into the library (Report, 1850: Minute 59);

2, The views of art and culture which prevailed at the time provided no basis for making cultural resources more widely available to the general public. The influence of the civic humanist tradition was especially important in this respect (Barrell, 1986). Developed in the 18th century by writers like Anthony Shaftesbury and transmitted into the 19th century by Sir Joshua Reynolds, this tradition attributed an important role to the fine arts in cultivating civic virtue on the part of a free and equal citizenry. At the same time, however, it limited membership of that citizenry to propertied men, and especially to landowners. Only property holders, it was argued, could develop the capacity to reason and generalise from their contact with the exemplary virtues depicted in historical paintings and sculptures to cultivate a public-minded civic consciousness; and

3, The mechanic or artisan was explicitly denied this capacity. The requirements of their occupations, it was argued, limited the mental abilities of those who worked with their hands to the capacity to repeat simple technical operations and did not equip them with the ability to reason from the particular to the general. Women were held to be governed by a similar limitation, but, in this case, by nature rather than because of their occupations.

The civic role of museums was thus very limited in its social compass. Labourers and women were not included among the citizenry for whom art and culture might play a role in cultivating civic virtues, while, albeit for different reasons, they were also regarded as unable to interpret works of art and culture in ways that would facilitate such virtues. There was, accordingly, no basis for thinking that making cultural resources more broadly available by providing for public access to art galleries, museums and libraries would produce any tangible civic benefits.



The emerging ascendancy of the civic role of museums was evident, in Britain, in the 1840s and 1850s when enabling legislation allowed local councils to levy rates in order to establish public museums, galleries and libraries. The same period saw the establishment of London's South Kensington Museum which articulated a number of important new principles:

1, As Britain's first state-supported museum allowing the public unrestricted entry, the South Kensington Museum also embodied new principles of public administration in being governed through the newly-established Department of Science and Art rather than through a board of trustees (Pearson, 1982: 30-34);

2, The Museum also functioned as the organising centre for a national network of public museums — all placed clearly under the control of municipal governments — which resulted from the enabling legislation of the 1840s and 1850s.

In some measure, these developments were a response to demands based on new democratic conceptions of cultural rights. These had been articulated by democratic and radical opinion in the early decades of the century and such arguments found their way into the vocabularies of liberal reformers who proved to be the crucial force in translating new views of museums' civic functions into practice. For Edward Edwards, one of the most important advocates of public libraries, access to cultural resources was a 'matter of right, and not matter of favour' (Edwards, 1869: 56). For the greater part, however, reforming sentiment was activated more by a mixture of liberal and utilitarian calculations regarding the benefits that would accrue to the state from providing public museums and art galleries than by any generalised support for the democratic principle of free and universal rights of access to public cultural resources.

The nature of these benefits was most clearly summarised in 'the museum idea' championed by Sir Henry Cole, the founding Director of the South Kensington Museum and the most influential museum and arts administrator of the period (Cole, 1884). In accordance with this idea, the museum was to be charged with a new civic responsibility that it was to discharge by producing a new kind of self-reforming person. Its civic task, in this regard, was particularly directed toward the workingman. Exposed to the refining influence of art and culture, it was suggested, the workingman would be tempted away from the public house and set on a career of self-improve-

ment through which he would be transformed into a responsible, thrifty and prudent head of household. The following passage, outlining what was expected from the opening of the Sheepshank Gallery in the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1858, gives some idea of the civilising influence it was hoped museums would exert.

The anxious wife will no longer have to visit the different taprooms to drag her poor besotted husband home. She will seek for him at the nearest museum, where she will have to exercise all the persuasion of her affection to tear him away from the rapt contemplation of a Raphael. (Cited in Physik, 1982: 35)

What had changed to make this an intelligible expectation in the mid-century? Two reasons stand to the fore:

1, The influence of new ways of thinking about the population meant that the conduct and behaviour of the workingman became a new kind of moral and political problem. For, in accordance with the stark alternatives posed by Malthusianism — depopulate or perish — it was seen as essential that the workingman be inducted into a new form of life, one governed by sobriety and sexual restraint rather than by drunken debauchery, if the survival of the species was not to be threatened; and

2, If it was thought that exposure to art and culture might help the workingman make this passage, this was because receptivity to the improving and civilising influence of art was no longer held to be dependent on a particular kind of intellectual capacity. Rather, under the influence of Romanticism, art and culture were now imbued with the capacity to soothe, refine and civilise conduct. As such, their influence was exerted experientially rather than simply intellectually. Their purpose was to help the individual to overcome such disabling oppositions as that between reason and the emotions and so to cultivate a new kind of wholeness.

Precisely because of this, however, this new conception of the museum's civic function entailed its civic focus centring mainly on men.

For, in Romantic conceptions, women were, again by their nature, held to be nearer to the ideal wholeness of personality that the work of art was to help cultivate and so less in need of the museum's assistance in this matter than their more vulgar and less harmonious menfolk (Vogel, 1987).

In this view, then, the museum was to help make better citizens principally by bringing about the moral reform of the workingman and so making him a better husband, worker and father with an in-built capacity for regulating his sexual conduct

and leisure habits in ways which would contribute to the greater good of civilisation. In place of arguments based on principles of cultural rights, the museum's civic task, in this view, was to help form a male citizenry that would better serve the needs of the state and the economy.

#### THE 'NEW MUSEUM IDEA'

A similar orientation characterised what was perhaps the most distinctive late 19th century understanding of the museum's civic task. This was embodied in 'the new museum idea' — so called because, like the original 'museum idea' championed by Henry Cole, it stressed the public educational responsibilities of the museum. It did so, however, in a different context in which questions regarding the kind of schooling in civics the museum was to provide, and whom it was to provide such a schooling for, were posed and answered in new ways. Its most important distinguishing characteristics were:

- 1, The currency of 'the new museum idea' was an international one in ways that had not been true of its predecessor. Actively promoted throughout the British colonies by the Museums Association (Coombes, 1988), it also had an active and influential advocate in America in the person of George Brown Goode, the Director of the US National Museum at the Smithsonian Institution (Goode, 1895); and

- 2, The kind of citizen which 'the new museum idea' addressed and sought to shape was also, in important respects, an international one. Under the influence of social evolutionary conceptions and imperialist ideologies, the citizen the museum sought to fashion was envisaged as part of a trans-national community of European and white-settler societies bound together by an imperial unity of interests and global civic responsibilities deriving from their status as the most advanced and evolved representatives of humanity.

The museum, in short, was to teach the lessons and responsibilities of progress and, in doing so, to help form an international citizenry that would be alert to the importance of the historical civilising mission with which it was charged. The emphasis of 'the new museum idea' fell on the role of ethnological collections and museums of natural history in forming a sense of mission and identity among those who, by virtue of their heredity, were charged with the obligation of keeping the progressive blood-line of European stock free from eugenic degeneration, while also

civilising colonised peoples as their potential allowed. The role of the museum was

to instruct the public in the part that inherited traits, character, virtues, vices, capabilities, temper, diseases, play in the destinies of men (cit. Coombes, 1988: 62).

If this provided for the construction of a trans-national community — a Victorian ecumene as Carol Breckenridge (1989) has called it — it also played a significant role in seeking to recruit the newly enfranchised working classes in support of imperialist sentiments and projects and, by so doing, to weaken their attachment to socialist ideas and political movements.

Perhaps the most lasting legacy of this period, however, derived from the importance it attached to the museum's potential to shape citizens-in-the-making. For it was only in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that the child became a significant object of attention for museums. Prior to this period, no special effort had been made to attract children to museums — to the contrary, they had often been regarded as a nuisance — just as no special provision had been made for them if they did visit. The last quarter of the 19th century witnessed a dramatic reversal of this tendency, with museums of natural history frequently leading the way. Some examples of this tendency are:

- 1, In the United States, the inclusion of children within the museum's civic responsibilities was signalled by the museum of the Boston Society of Natural History when, in the 1880s, it established a Teachers School of Science through which, by training teachers in the moral lessons which might be derived from the study of natural history, those lessons were to be carried into the classroom (Kohlstedt, 1979);

- 2, The American Museum of Natural History became a part of a program of public civics providing the children of New York with a popular schooling in the evolutionary messages of natural history (Sloan, 1980);

- 3, In Britain, the Education Act of 1902 made provision for time spent in museums by children accompanied by their teachers to count as time spent in school — a step which led to museums placing a new stress on schools programs not only in Britain but throughout the Empire; and

- 4, The education programs of the Queensland Museum date from the same period. Carried here by the British Association for the Advancement of Science, the idea that museums should serve as an instrument for schooling children in the lessons of civics was put into great effect under the directorship of Dr Ronald Hamlyn-Harris.

### EXPANDING CIVIC HORIZONS

There were, however, other tendencies over this period worth highlighting:

1. The first, in the context of first-wave feminism, concerns criticisms of the museum for its failure either to address women or to accord adequate attention to displaying women's art and culture. The most influential developments here were largely American. The Women's Art Museum Association, established in the 1870s, played an important role (McCarthy, 1991). Women's influence on the early American heritage movement was important in ensuring that both the public and domestic activities of women would be seen as worthy of historical commemoration (Hosmer, 1965). The major symbol of women's claims to be accorded equal representational status with men, however, was The Woman's Building in the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893. From today's perspective, the display of women's culture seems limited given its tendency to reinforce the notion of separate spheres by focusing its portrayal of women's achievements on the arts of the domestic sphere (Weimann, 1981). The grounds on which this challenge was made, however, had considerable radical potential. The arguments which American feminists used to argue their case for including women's art and culture in exhibitions and museums was that, since these claimed to offer an encyclopaedic coverage of world culture, they could hardly afford to neglect the contributions of half the world's population (Greenhalgh, 1988). By pushing their universalist claims to their logical conclusions, first-wave feminists targeted museums and exhibitions as test sites for arguing and developing principles of equal cultural rights for women. In these ways, America's first-wave feminists anticipated and provided a model for other social movements which have taken museums and exhibitions to task for their exclusions and their hierarchical rankings of peoples and their cultures; and

2. The folk-museum movement had similar consequences in extending the range of what was thought of as representable. First developed in Scandinavia, mainly in association with nationalist movements, and subsequently developed in America, folk museums invested historical significance in the everyday economic and cultural activities of ordinary people. The folk museum's concentration on preservation and exhibition of past or disappearing rural ways of life at the expense of contemporary urban and industrial ones has been criticised for promoting

a nostalgic idealisation of the past. Mark Sandberg reassessed this argument. The folk museum, he suggests, offered its largely urbanised visitors less a nostalgic idealisation of the past than an opportunity to manage the losses of modernity by portraying rural pasts in forms which made them instantly accessible and knowable to an increasingly mobile modern gaze. The folk museum, Sandberg suggests, made the past picturable in much the same way that a whole multitude of worlds was made available to the gaze of the modern city-dweller by the cinema (Sandberg, 1994). Whatever their precise significance at the time, however, the subsequent influence of folk museums has been considerable. They have prompted a significant enlargement of the frames of reference of all museums so that, today, a concern with everyday cultures and customs is evident in most museum types. Folk museums have also been partly responsible for that broadening of the concept of what a museum is that lies behind such modern museum forms as the living-history museum or the eco museum.

However, these are largely post-war developments. In the early 20th century, museums did not significantly change the understandings of their civic responsibilities that they had inherited from the 19th century. Changes were evident in some areas of museum display. In anthropology, Franz Boas effectively challenged the evolutionary assumptions which had justified the display of colonised indigenous peoples as 'primitive'. However, this affected only a small number of museums. For the greater part, western conceptions of progress continued to provide the organising categories for most museum displays in anthropology, natural history, and the history of science, medicine and technology, through into the 1950s.

### CIVIC MANAGERIALISM

Perhaps the most significant pre-war changes concern the museums' responsibilities to visitors. The crucial developments originated in America where the nature and tasks of museum administration were increasingly posed in terms borrowed from the new language of scientific management. This was especially true of the role which the more go-ahead museums accorded social science surveys of their visitors as a necessary means of discharging their civic responsibilities.

The civilising mission accorded museums in the various 19th century conceptions of their civic function meant that, even at this time,



museum administrators were interested in the social composition of the visitor public. However, information on these matters was never collected in anything other than an impressionistic way. A typical method was to count visitors over bank-holiday periods and weekends and, since these were the most popular times for working-class visitors, to use these figures as a rough measure of how effectively the 'civilising effect' of museums was being distributed throughout the population (see Greenwood, 1888, for a summary of information of this type). In the 1920s and 1930s, however, and especially in America, social science surveys were increasingly used to monitor both the social contexts in which people visited museums and their patterns of behaviour when in the museum. Radically behaviourist in orientation, the visitor survey formed part of a new ethos of museum management which envisaged the visitor less as a citizen with rights than as a passive recipient of the museum's pedagogic message. The resulting orientation — Neil Harris calls it one of 'authoritarian experimentalism' (Harris, 1990) — was one in which a more detailed knowledge of visitor behaviour was sought in order that the museum environment might be so designed as to facilitate the visitor's instruction and thus enhance the museum's ability to transmit civic virtue to the citizen.

Yet this authoritarian and managerialist orientation was often combined with a fiercely populist understanding of the museum's duty to 'the people'. The result was often a quite savage indictment of museums for their failure to serve the population as a whole. In his *Plan for a New Museum*, John Cotton Dana chastised old-fashioned art museums for allowing themselves to have been captured as little more than fashion centres for elite society. In their place, he proposed 'institutes of visual instruction' which, through the use of social science surveys, were to seek to achieve 'returns for their cost' that are 'in good degree positive, definite, visible, measurable' (Dana, 1920: 13). This involved a highly detailed customising of the museum environment, designing every aspect of the visitor's experience in order to give rise to planned and definite effects. The business of the art museum is no longer 'to evoke wonder in the casual observer, or to arouse the admiration and pride of fellow citizens or the astonishment and envy of citizens of other cities' (Dana, 1920: 22) but is rather to be 'a new museum of the definitely useful, teaching type' (Dana, 1920: 28).

T.R. Adams strikes a similar note in *The Civic Value of Museums*. Noting that 'the control, discipline, and measurement of the museum visitor still eludes the science of pedagogy' so that the 'crowds that wander through museum halls, looking where they like and conversing as they please, are as foot-loose as the street philosophers of ancient Athens' (Adams, 1937: 13), he looks forward to a situation in which a closer knowledge of visitor habits will allow the museum to fulfil its civic role more effectively. He is in no doubt, in the case of art museums, with regard to what this civic role is or should be. 'The responsibility of an art museum in a democracy,' he asserts, 'is primarily to determine what shall be considered art by the general public' (Adams, 1937: 20). The assumption that the mass of people might be able to form their own views on such matters is, he suggests, 'something of a polite fiction' (Adams, 1937: 20). Modern democracy is based on the principles of the division of labour so that 'experts are expected to guide popular judgement in the understanding of art in somewhat the same way as doctors might advise in matters of public health' (Adams, 1937: 19-20).

'The ordinary citizen' then, 'requires strong guidance in order to build up his cultural tastes, and he looks to the institution possessing the greatest social prestige for this guidance' (Adams, 1937: 20). To offer such guidance, however, art museums must contrive to manage the museum's space and the visitor's experience in the closest possible detail to maximise the amount and value of the guidance the visitor receives:

The larger and more richly stored the museum is, the greater the need for an effective plan of guidance for the average visitor. Otherwise, invisible barriers are put up against the general public. Though the physical doors of the museum remain open, the uninformed visitor finds himself at loose in a labyrinth of culture to which he lacks the secret. The minority who come armed with previous knowledge receive too great a proportion of the benefits of museum education. (Adams, 1937: 31).

We can see, in this passage, how, although the premises for the didacticism which Adams espouses are clearly authoritarian, they nonetheless offer a basis from which museums can be criticised for falling short of their civic responsibilities if it is evident that they are monopolised by particular sections of the population. In a later study, Adams suggested that this was precisely what had happened to America's major metropolitan art museums. He argued that these conducted their affairs as though the 'right to appreciate aesthetic qualities' was 'a privilege of

wealth and leisure'. Art museums, he argued, 'set up barriers against the proper diffusion of improved standards of taste throughout a metropolitan area' (Adams, 1939: 62).

#### POST-WAR DEVELOPMENTS: ACCESS, PARTICIPATION AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Adams's argument prefigures what has been an important and continuing aspect of museum critique in the post-war period. In 1969, Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel published their influential study *For the Love of Art*. Based on a statistical survey of the social backgrounds of art museum visitors in a range of European countries, this study showed that it was indeed true that such museums were most regularly used by members of the professional classes with high educational qualifications and hardly at all by manual workers. Bourdieu and Darbel suggested, in terms similar to those proposed by Adams, that this was partly because most art museums made no effort to contextualise the art they exhibited. In thus assuming that their visitors would already have the kinds of cultural skills and knowledge — or 'cultural capital', as they called it — needed to understand the art displayed, Bourdieu and Darbel suggested that art museums effectively discriminated against those whose social and educational backgrounds had not effectively equipped them with such skills (Bourdieu & Darbel, 1969).

Similar patterns of visitation have been shown in a wide range of similar studies conducted in America, Australia and Britain (Dimaggio & Useem, 1978; Bennett & Frow, 1991; and Bennett, 1994). The result is a now commanding body of literature which highlights an important contradiction in the functioning of the modern museum. It has been important throughout the modern period that the museum, as a public and civic institution, should be as accessible as possible to all citizens. However, studies following Bourdieu's and Darbel's work suggest that the museum's capacity to perform a genuine civic role in modern mass democracies where everyone is to count as a citizen, and on equal terms, is limited by important structural restrictions placed on its capacity to reach or appeal to a significant percentage of the population. Indeed, and especially in the case of art museums, such evidence is sometimes interpreted to suggest that, far from serving a general public and civic function, such institutions now serve mainly to symbolise social distinctions within an increasingly homogeneous population. They do so by

providing a context in which those who visit art museums regularly can establish that they are, culturally, a cut above the rest of the population.

Post-war responses to such criticisms, however, have not been cast in the mould of the authoritarian didacticism that Adams espoused in the 1930s. The regret they have occasioned has been less that the efficiency of the public museum as an instrument for guiding public taste has been impaired because of its inability to reach beyond the more educated sections of the population. Rather, it has been that those who are denied effective access to museums — whether it be for physical, intellectual or cultural reasons — are, at the same time, being denied their cultural rights as citizens. This is an important difference. For Adams, the monopolisation of museums by social elites entailed that they must fail in their civic duty to instruct and guide public taste and knowledge. In interpreting similar evidence over the period since the 1960s, by contrast, the stress has been placed on the barriers which impede all citizens from having equal rights of access to the cultural resources of museums and on how to remove those barriers to translate the principles of equality of cultural rights into practice.

It has been through the pursuit of this new access and equity rubric of citizenship that the fourth of the principles governing modern understandings of the relations between museums and citizenship has been developed. This consists in the belief that the cultures of all groups within a society should be represented within museums, and be accorded equal worth and value. In previous periods, the citizen's right of access was a right of access to the exemplary forms of art, culture and knowledge that the museum deemed appropriate to make available. From the French Revolution to the authoritarian didacticism of Adams, the museum remained, as Pommier has put it, a 'sanctuary of the example'. It remained a place in which the citizen was to be improved through exposure to examples of civic virtue, to the morally improving influence of high art or to the models of progress represented by the most evolved types of humanity. However, this entailed an equivalent devaluation of all persons and culture not accorded such an exemplary status — of women in relation to men, of colonised peoples in relation to Europeans, of ordinary and everyday forms of culture in relation to the officially canonised arts.

Perhaps the most distinctive recent changes to our understanding of the civic role of museums, have been the challenges to the museum's con-

ception as a 'sanctuary of the example'. The impetus for such challenges has come from two main sources:

1, An important role has been played by research of the kind initiated by Bourdieu and Darbel. For one conclusion to be drawn from the evidence suggesting that significant cultural barriers impede broadly-based patterns of social access to museums is to propose that those barriers might be removed by requiring that museums cater equally to the cultural interests and preferences of all sections of the population rather than concentrating on elite forms of art and history which have conventionally been accorded exemplary status. It is arguments of this kind that have lain behind the much greater attention that is paid to everyday social history in history museums and to the popular arts in art museums. Such changing practices have also entailed a significant revaluation of the role of the curator. For Adams, the job of the curator was to act as an arbiter of public taste, guiding it through the selection of exemplary works of art. Although such conceptions remain, the more contemporary understanding of the curator's role is likely to see it as a facilitative one, ensuring that different cultures and values make a claim on the museum's space and the right to be shown there, rather than installing simply the one canonical version of art, history or science; and

2, The case for a reformed agenda of citizenship has also been pressed with most force and effect by the variety of social movements which, since the 1970s, have been active in fuelling those criticisms of the museum associated with the new museology. The women's movement has led the way here, returning to the lessons of first-wave feminism to remind museums that their claims to universality entail greater attention to women's art and culture. However, similar arguments have been pressed, and with equal vigour, on behalf of the cultures of the working-classes, the minority ethnic communities and First Peoples. Irit Rogoff offers a convenient summary of the cumulative impact of these developments:

Over the past twenty years a broad range of critical analyses have converged on the museum, unmasking the structures, rituals, and procedures by which the relations between objects, bodies of knowledge, and processes of ideological persuasion are enacted. The critical analysis of the museum as the site of actively disseminated hegemonic culture has taken place within several overall categories focusing .... on issues of classification and ordering, on the links between collecting and ideology, on the ability of modes of representation to manage cultural consciousness, and on a recognition of the absences and exclusions that museums practice. (Rogoff, 1994: 232).

Museums now have a much less singular conception of their civic roles. The identities they seek to organise are now likely to be plural and non-hierarchical in ways which recognise the class, ethnic, gender and sexual divisions within the population. Rather than being 'sanctuaries of the example', museums are now perhaps better thought of as sanctuaries of *examples*. They are places where different artefacts fulfil different exemplary functions for different social groups rather than shrines for the universally normative example intended to serve as a model for all citizens.

### MUSEUMS AND CITIZENSHIP IN AUSTRALIA

In the first issue of *The Australian Quarterly Journal of Theology, Literature and Science*, an anonymous correspondent urged that an Australian Museum be established to

show that Australia is not occupied by a handful of felons or a few poor needy adventurers, anxious only for the accumulation of wealth, but that the seeds of a great Nation are sown and are even now beginning to fructify — that a national feeling is springing up — that a fifth continent is gradually but rapidly advancing to the lists as a competitor in the race for honour and for fame ... (Anon, 1828: 62).

The sentiment was somewhat atypical. Although, from the earliest European arrivals, collections of Australian flora and fauna played an important role in nourishing a sense of Australian distinctiveness, that distinctiveness was not usually conceived in national terms. From their origins in the 1820s and 1830s and into the early 20th century, Australia's major museums were mainly colonial in conception and functioning. By the 1890s, each of the States had established a museum (for brief histories of the major State museums of South Australia, Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales, see, respectively, Hale, 1956; Mather, 1986; Prescott, 1979; and Strahan, 1979). In terms of their governance, these museums were firmly integrated into the differentiated State-specific colonial administrations of the period. So far as the identities they sought to nurture and develop were concerned, the concepts of citizenship informing the practices of these museums were more imperial than nationalist in conception.

The change toward a more clearly nationalist conception of the role Australian collecting institutions might play in helping form a sense of common identity and heritage on the part of a citizenry seen as national did not come until after the Great War. If the Australian War Memorial



was the most obvious symbol of this change, so it has also — in more recent times — come to be regarded as symbolising the limitations of the ways in which, in the inter-war years and though into the 1950s, museums envisaged both the identity and composition of the citizenry they sought to address and to fashion. The Memorial has been the subject of more than one critique which has highlighted the singular, largely masculinist and wholly white and European, conceptions of 'the Australian' which, until recently, have informed its design, its displays and its public rhetorics (Inglis, 1985). These critiques have been part of a process through which museums have been called on to revise their policies and practices in order to help shape a more plural and differentiated set of civic identities that will be appropriate to the needs of a multicultural society, alert to gender differences and mindful of the distinctive claims and needs of indigenous Australians.

These, then, in the briefest of outline, are the major historical shifts relating to the ways in which the civic roles and functions of museums have been understood and debated in Australia. As such, they have provided the contexts in which European and American conceptions of museums and their civic tasks have been drawn on and, in being applied locally, subjected to new interpretations and inflections. There have been a number of distinctive Australian additions to the lexicons of museums and citizenship we have reviewed so far. It is to a fuller delineation of these that we now turn.

#### CITIZENS OF EMPIRE

However much their establishment may have been prompted by proto-nationalist sentiments, the initial impetus for Australia's early museums was as much practical as symbolic. While emerging civic pride was a factor in the considerations of the literary, philosophical and scientific societies which typically provided the bases from which the early museums developed, the focus on natural history collections which characterised these museums was primarily a response to the need to identify and catalogue the natural resources of the continent. In part, this entailed a concentration on the 'rare and curious' — or, more accurately, on what appeared rare and curious when viewed from the perspective of European systems of classification. In this respect the practices of Australian museums were governed by the structures of colonial science (Kohlstedt, 1983; MacLeod, 1982). Their role was to collect

the new flora and fauna of Australia and then to send specimens of these to the centres of metropolitan science — most notably, the British Museum (Rupke, 1994) — for classification and interpretation. However, in common with the trend in Europe where, since the late 18th century, natural history collections had increasingly been governed by the practical interests of the emerging middle classes (Pomian, 1990), Australia's early museums were also guided by a more utilitarian interest in identifying those resources which might prove of commercial value.

While, from the outset, these museums were established as public institutions, they were largely the preserve of amateur gentlemen scientists (Anderson, 1993). While not formally excluding working class men and women, they made little attempt to attract them. Similarly, although admitting 'lady' visitors, these played little if any role in the governance of museums while Aborigines were admitted only as dead specimens. A rather different pattern was established by the Mechanics Institutes that were established over roughly the same period, beginning in 1827 and reaching their hey-day in the 1850s and 1860s (Candy & Laurent, 1994). These often had museums and libraries attached to them and made a greater effort to reach all social classes. By the 1850s, there was an effective national network of Mechanics Institutes whose role in the early formation of a public culture in Australia cannot be overestimated. However, as Philip Candy (1994: 2-3) points out, it was a public culture that fostered a sense more of an imperial than of a national community. This was mainly because the Australian Institutes formed part of a world-wide colonial network that had common roots in the English Mechanics Institutes movement.

This network also comprised one of the routes through which, from the mid-century period, the 'museum idea' was translated to the Australian context. The success of the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the subsequent development of the South Kensington Museum with its open-door policy and active interest in attracting working-class visitors were frequently cited as models prompting similar orientations in Australia's major State museums. Early experiments in the development of 'outreach systems' placed Australia at the forefront of international developments in this area. William Stanley Jevons's involvements in such Australian experiments substantially influenced his later writings. In the late 19th century he advocated the role

which museums might play in multiplying culture's utility by making cultural resources more generally available to the whole population (Jevons, 1883).

The second half of the 19th century saw a greater stress placed on the public educational functions of Australian museums. Sally Kohlstedt (1983) argued that this stress placed particular emphasis on the educational value of natural history which remained the single most important collecting focus in Australian institutions. After 1860 such collections were increasingly complemented by ethnological collections focusing on the remains and material culture of Australia's Aboriginal peoples. The organisation of the relations between such ethnological collections and natural history displays increasingly governed the educational and civic functions of the museums.

#### FORMING A NATIONAL CITIZENRY

These, then, are some of the considerations relevant to the context in which 'the new museum idea' — actively promoted by both the Museums Association and the British Association for the Advancement of Science — was articulated to museum policies and practices in late 19th- and early 20th-century Australia. This imperial frame of reference was partly responsible for the relative lack of interest that museums showed in non-Aboriginal artefacts of Australian history. Although this lack of a distinctively national-historical focus on the part of Australian museums is, by now, a common observation (Anderson, 1993; Bennett, 1988), the available accounts differ in explanations for this. Two might usefully be commented on here:

- 1, Since they did not conform to the model of significant historical events as suggested by Eurocentric norms, the major episodes of Australian history did not seem worthy of preservation or commemoration. They were, accordingly, overlooked, viewed as devoid of historical significance; and

- 2, The prevailing view of the protocols which history needed to observe in order to establish itself as a discipline may also have been a contributory factor (Healy, 1994). As a way of distinguishing itself from the kinds of interest in historical artefacts exhibited by amateur forms of antiquarianism, Healy argues, history eschewed artefactual sources in favour of written documents.

Whatever the causes the effect was palpable enough: even as late as 1933 a survey commis-

sioned by the Museums Association was able to comment pointedly on the virtual absence of historical collections or displays relating to the period since 1788 (Markham & Richards, 1933).

The most significant corrective to this tendency was the development of the Australian War Memorial from 1917, when Bean first mooted the proposal, to 1941, when the Memorial opened. It would be a mistake, however, to view the development of the Memorial in isolation. Rather, its significance is properly appreciated only when seen as a national capping of broadly-based and nation-wide initiatives — the military mementos displayed in small local museums, the erection of war memorials in virtually all towns and cities — through which a more clearly nationalistic public historical sphere was formed. Truly a 'sanctuary of the example', the model citizen implied by the Memorial was male and military, a serviceman. Though still fond of the ties which bound him to England, he was undeniably Australian, and he was democratic.

There seems, however, to have been relatively little parallel innovation in the inter-war period on the part of the major State museums. Yet it is hard to assess whether this is a reliable judgement. It is now over a decade since John Mulvaney (1982/3) complained of the inadequacy of available research into the history of Australian museums. If the intervening period has witnessed a flurry of work towards correcting this situation, scarcely any has related to the inter-war years. The impression conveyed by such work as has been done, however, suggests that there was little significant change in the principles regulating natural history and ethnological museum displays which continued to be dominated by evolution into the 1950s.

#### DISAGGREGATING THE NATION

It is a singular and remarkable fact that, as Jane Spring puts it, '86% of the 237 museums for which dates are known were established after 1960' (Spring, 1994: 1). Perhaps even more remarkable, 46% of Australia's existing museums were established in the 1980s. There is also no doubting where the balance of this growth has been. The past thirty years has seen the establishment of what now amounts to a significant number of museums focussing on the social, cultural and technological history of 19th- and 20th-century Australia.

These museums have been of various types:

- 1, Some have been established as national institutions: the Australian National Maritime

Museum and, even though it seems destined to remain a 'virtual reality' for some time to come, the Museum of Australia;

2, Others have been State initiatives: the Powerhouse Museum, Hyde Park Barracks, and the museums of the History Trust of South Australia, for example,

3, Some have been the result of private initiative: the Stockmans Hall of Fame and Timber-town, for example;

4, Others have involved the introduction of new museum types into the Australian context: the living-history orientation of Sovereign Hill, for example, or the construction of the Living Museum of the West in accordance with the principles of the ecomuseum,

5, Some have been specific-issue museums focusing on a specific industry or way of life, such as the Woodworks Museum at Gympie; and

6, Others have been dedicated to the histories of specific groups or communities — the Jewish Museums in Melbourne and Sydney and Melbourne's Chinese Museum, for example.

This diversity of museum types has contributed to the disaggregation of those earlier singular conceptions of Australian cultural and civic identity. It is, however, only over the past decade or so that a pluralising and differentiating civic function has become an accepted policy objective of the major public museums. Two reports of inquiries into museums and national collections and the administration of the National Estate remain the major landmark policy documents of the post-war period (*Report of the National Estate*, 1974; *Museums in Australia*, 1975). As such, they signalled a clear commitment to the view that museums and heritage institutions more generally should organise and represent a more open and democratic version of the national past, one that would be generally inclusive of all sections of the population and so able to address and acknowledge their equal worth as citizens. Even so, the leitmotif of these documents was less one of the active promotion of diversity than one which, in tune with the new nationalism of the 1970s, sought to recognise the disparate historical interests and values of different sections of the population while forging these into a new unifying national mythos. This was most evident in the place accorded Aboriginal culture within both reports as Aboriginal claims to difference and autonomy were overridden. The newly-discovered antiquity of Aboriginal history and culture were accorded the role of anchoring the

fledgling Australian national past into a longer historical context.

The predominating tendency over the past decade has been away from the notion that museums should be concerned to help fashion a national citizenry by so interpreting and displaying natural, scientific and cultural artefacts as to suggest a single or even privileged national identity. The effective advocacy of human rights by international organisations such as UNESCO and ICOM; the domestic and international influence of social movements, especially of women and First Peoples; the increasing importance of the policy agendas of multiculturalism within Australia; and the influence of post-modernist arguments and debates: all have tended in the direction of stressing a new civic function for museums, one orientated to schooling a population into tolerance of, and respect for, diversity.

These tendencies are not unique to museums. A looser, more pliable relation to questions concerning the relations between culture, identity and citizenship has been evident across all official forms of national culture (Cochrane & Goodman, 1988) just as an affirmation of the virtues of cultural hybridisation can also be found in commercial popular culture (Turner, 1994). If these tendencies are present in museums, this is not to say that they are the only such tendencies or that they can count on a future in which their ascendancy will be unimpeded. To the contrary, in *Things that Matter*, the 1994 cultural policy statement of the Liberal Party, the stress placed on the need to reinvent a unifying set of national core values serves as a reminder that opinion on these matters is still divided.

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## CHAPTER 2

### WOMEN IN MUSEUMS: THE SHIFT FROM SECOND-CLASS TO FULL CITIZENSHIP

ROBIN TROTTER

#### INTRODUCTION

Museums are facing challenges in those aspects of management that could exclude or marginalise groups on the basis of gender, race, class or sexual orientation. Policies and practices of these institutions have been subjected to increasing scrutiny for display practices that either ignore or subordinate women and women's perspectives. Also on the agenda are equal employment opportunities for women within museums and related fields, as well as greater access to decision-making.

A number of contexts and concerns have informed these emergent criticisms: the women's movement; wider debates about cultural rights; relations between gender and national identity; and developments within various disciplines, particularly history. One of the most significant forces has been the dramatic growth of social history. Women's history has benefited greatly from this shift in historiographical focus. It has brought into the mainstream of historical interest

those things that were once considered marginal, female, and belonging to nature rather than history. The minutiae of women's lives, in the home, the workplace, the marketplace, in organisations, have become serious objects of historical analysis, (Curthoys, 1993).

Intersecting with these broader social movements, and acting as both catalyst and mirror of such concerns, have been government policies that had their origins in the 1970s. In 1972 the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 1975 as International Women's Year and the following decade the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985). The primary objective of these proclamations was to improve the status of women. A crucial, and at the time, controversial Australian initiative, was appointment of an adviser to the Prime Minister on women's issues. This was followed by creation of a Women's Affairs section in the Prime Minister's Department which, in 1982, became the Office of the Status of Women. Other key initiatives of Australian governments have been: the establishment in 1976 of a National Women's Advisory Consultative Council (this later became the National Women's Advisory Council); the passage of the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*, and of the *Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Op-*

*portunity for Women) Act 1986*; and *The National Agenda for Women* (1988) which affirmed the government's commitment to provide women with economic security and independence, freedom from discrimination and equality of opportunity in all spheres of activity. In 1989 the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs commenced an Inquiry into Equal Opportunity and Equal Status for Women in Australia. The Committee was to inquire into, and report on:

(i) progress made toward the achievement of equal opportunity and equal status for Australian women, with reference to participation in decision making processes, in the labour force, in leisure and sport;

(ii) the extent to which women receive appropriate recognition for their contribution to society; and

(iii) the extent to which young women are encouraged to participate equally in society.

*Half Way to Equal*, the subsequent report of the Committee, was released in 1992 with 79 recommendations covering work and equal opportunity in the workforce, leisure and sport, education and training, women with particular needs; and recognition of women.

While all these initiatives have concerned the status of women, their emphasis has tended to be on social welfare. For example, the Office for the Status of Women listed its agenda in 1989 as: skills training, award restructuring, domestic violence, workers with family responsibilities, child care, education, development of higher education equity goals, retirement incomes, Aboriginal women's issues, non-English speaking background women's issues, portrayal of women in the media, social security, rural women's issues, women's health and the appointment of women to government bodies. This emphasis on addressing social problems has meant cultural matters generally have been accorded a relatively low priority with museums, in particular, being almost completely ignored either as work places or as sites for the empowerment of women. Only in the latest report, *Half Way to Equal*, under the topic of women's recognition, do museums rate a mention. The report noted that, despite women's involvement in a multiplicity of

activities in public life, as part of the paid workforce, as volunteer workers and through their involvement in grass-roots organising committees, women rarely occupy positions of power and concluded that recognition of women's contributions to Australian history is very poor. This lack of recognition, it was noted, is reflected in the nature of displays and exhibits in museums, arts centres, and much of Australian literature. The report therefore recommended that public museums and institutions should be encouraged by the Department of Arts, Sport, Environment and Territories (DASETT) to include adequate depictions of women's history. And, in response to a submission from the Women's Place movement in Brisbane for a national centre dedicated to the celebration of women's place in the building of the nation, the Committee recommended that the Commonwealth Government investigate the possibility of funding a National Women's Place which would fully acknowledge women's contribution to Australian society and provide on-going support and recognition of women's contribution.

The *Government Response to Half Way to Equal* did little more than support, in principle, the above recommendations and to comment that, as part of DASETT's Access and Equity Plan, national museums and collecting institutions were being encouraged and were committed to collect, document and exhibit the contribution of women to Australian society.

But it is not only governments which have been slow to respond to this issue. Jane Glaser noted:

The historical fact is that the 'feminist movement' in the United States during the early 1970s by-passed the museum world. More accurately, American museums have ignored the feminist movement since its inception. (Glaser, 1991:180).

Australian museums have also been tardy in responding to the women's movement. However, within these institutions there has now emerged a feminist critique directed at the forms of representation of women in museums as well as at employment and career opportunities for women. During the mid-1980s lobby groups were formed to exchange ideas of women's heritage, to raise awareness of their criticisms and to encourage museums, and other agencies, to effect change. In Australia the catalyst was the 1988 Conference of the Council of Australian Museums (CAMA) at which a number of papers generated sufficient interest to warrant a Women's Section being established within the Museums Association of Australia (MAA). The Women's Section has sub-

sequently maintained pressure to ensure women's issues remain on the agenda.

The specific concerns articulated in critiques of museums in respect to women's issues have focused on achieving more balanced gender representation in collections, exhibitions and publications; pursuing equal employment opportunities for women in museums; and advocating appropriate government policies to support these ambitions. This chapter explores these concerns as they have been articulated in recent museums and policy debates, describes some notable examples that illustrate the changing relationship between museums and women, and suggests resources that may be of value to museum workers, visitors and pressure groups interested in the relations between women and museums.

## REPRESENTATION AND MUSEUM PRACTICES

This section considers recent feminist criticisms of museums about the representation of women's lives. These criticisms have highlighted both the invisibility of women and their under-representation in Australian museums as well as the marginalisation of women which occurs when women are portrayed as stereotypical or generic figures. Where pertinent, examples of 'best practice' in overseas museums will be drawn on to suggest some of the steps that might be taken to further improve the representation of women in Australia.

### WOMEN'S INVISIBILITY IN MUSEUM DISPLAYS

Museums present a past which is largely devoid of women; they construct the appearance of a past in which gender is not a dimension. (Jones, 1991: 24).

Through the objects that they assemble, museums make particular aspects of the past visible. The choice of objects and how to arrange them have important consequences for whose historical activities are made visible. A persistent criticism of museums has been that the work and contributions of women are more often ignored or given less prominence in displays than is the work and interests of men. Sian Jones argues that masculine interpretations of the past and subordination of women to incidental roles is a product of a patriarchal society. Subordination of women by such powerful social institutions as museums confirms women's invisibility and lower status not only in the past, but also at present. Women's absence from, or invisibility in, museum displays can be a result of subject matter, the prioritising

of male interests and values, research priorities or representational 'difficulties'.

*Choice of Subject Matter.* The thematic focus of many museums precludes, or makes difficult, the inclusion of material representing the lives and interests of women. Our Commonwealth museums, to date, have been constructed around the male topics of war and maritime life with, firstly, the Australian War Memorial and, more recently, the Australian National Maritime Museum. In the Australian War Memorial women are marginalised to a separate gallery (Daniels, 1991: 222-3) and the Maritime Museum, it has been argued, is 'masculine' in conception and preoccupation, and even with the best will in the world, cannot be made to represent women's lives and interests adequately (Clark, 1992: 5).

At State, regional and local levels, more diversity prevails although there is still a prevalence of masculine themes in specialist museums. These include: transport museums (rail, motor vehicles, aviation, horse-drawn vehicles etc), maritime museums, sports museums (concentrating on, or featuring men's sport or famous male sporting figures), and industry museums devoted to male-dominated industries such as sugar, timber, wool etc., and the ever-popular mining museums. Even in displays of frontier life as represented in museums such as the Stockman's Hall of Fame in Longreach (Queensland), women's lives are prescribed and limited by the predominant message that the frontier was, and still is, a man's world.

Masculine themes inherent in such specialist museums are reinforced by a predominance in general interest museums of machinery, weaponry, scientific equipment, etc. and a predisposition to displaying objects which represent technology, progress, work, and war. Several critics have argued that displays at the Powerhouse Museum are dominated by large machines. According to Frank Campbell, the Powerhouse collection demonstrates a shift from 'inexpensive but coherent collections of objects to staggeringly expensive aggregations of objects' that recreates a fetishism of the museum object, and one that is 'macho' in orientation:

Trains, planes, Chinese Bell, guns, swords and fast cars from the Twenties' are juxtaposed. Sheer size, age, rarity, and a very British taste for steam engines and locomotives shape the Stage 1 display. It's a macho exhibition. (Campbell, 1983: 13).

The Powerhouse's permanent exhibit, '... *Never done*': *Women's work in the home*, is acknowledged as one of the best Australian displays on domestic technology but is

overpowered by the overwhelming masculinity of the larger technological displays which are the clear focus of the museum (Anderson, 1990: 4).

*Prominence of Male Values.* When male values and interests provide the governing principle for museum displays the potential for museums to speak to and about women's experiences is often under-realised. In such cases, even though temporary or small displays may highlight women or women's culture, these

scarcely impinge on the overall message of the museum which continues to be directed to an imagined male audience (Anderson, 1993: 17).

In a similar vein, Margaret Maynard claims the Queensland Museum accords a high profile to 'masculine exhibits like aeroplanes, steam engines and casts of dinosaurs' but rarely displays part of its extensive collection of nineteenth and twentieth century clothing (Maynard, 1992: 81). A male-oriented, ideology of progress informs not only natural history displays but also those devoted to social history and material culture; technological displays focus on either the inventor (male) or function (where used by males); and, where heroic figures are represented, they are most often men.

Even within the house-museum where one would expect women's concerns to be accorded major significance, women can, and do, remain invisible. As Marilyn Lake has argued, it is architectural significance which has been the principal reason for preserving most of these buildings. Or they have been preserved as

testaments to the talent of individual men (and in the twentieth century, the exceptional woman) who designed them and those wealthy enough to commission them (Lake, 1991: 46).

Where historical significance has been a motivating force for preservation, again it is mostly where associations with prominent or famous men, pioneers or historical events, have been identified. One of Melbourne's most popular tourist attractions is Captain Cook's Cottage which was brought out from England and located in the Treasury Gardens. Ballarat proudly presents to its visitors the cottage of Adam Lindsay Gordon which was built in the Western district and relocated to the Ballarat Botanical Gardens. Similarly, Bert Hinkler's home in England was dismantled and relocated to Bundaberg to house a Hinkler museum. An exception to this trend of 'museumising' the homes of famous men is the opening of May Gibb's cottage, Nutcote, in Sydney. Nutcote will operate as a memorial to May Gibbs.

Display strategies for house-museums tend to focus on material consumption with reconstructions that stress architectural magnificence, and the opulent furnishings and decoration that graced these buildings at the peak of their history. But in these historic houses there is seldom any evidence of domestic production. In the past, servant quarters and work areas such as kitchens, laundries etc. may have been removed, closed, modernised or converted to office and administrative spaces. Even though new criteria for evaluating historical significance are gradually being adopted by various heritage bodies, Lake contends these criteria are still 'masculinist' in that they continue to obscure the fact that the home was, and is, a workplace and place of industry, especially for women.

Houses are texts, they constitute valuable documents of women's historical agency as well as suggesting the limits to that agency. (Lake, 1991: 54).

*Research Priorities.* Until recently women's material culture has not been high on the research priorities of museums, academic institutions or heritage organisations. Partly as a consequence of this neglect, museums lack adequate research resources on which to draw so that it is often difficult for them to respond to demands that museums give more attention to women's lives. Unfortunately it will take some time before the consequences of this neglect can be repaired. In particular, research into women's material culture has long been overlooked. As Ruth Cowan has argued:

The crib, the playpen, the teething ring and the cradle are as much a part of our culture and our sense of

TABLE 1. Academic Output Relating to Women — Selected Museums, 1991/1992 (Source: various annual reports).

Museum	Number of Publications	Publications on Women
Queensland Museum	Total 173 Natural science 148 History 17 Maritime archaeology 5 General 3	
Australian Museum	Total 194 Disciplinary topics (Anthropology, Earth & Environmental Sciences, Zoology) 155 General topics (Exhibitions, Education, Conservation, Corporate services, etc.) 39	<i>On course: studying science communication for fun and profit.</i> C. Arkinstall <i>Getting back: returning to science after a career break.</i> C. Arkinstall <i>Museums and access — Whose knowledge? Whose past?</i> A. Skates*
Powerhouse Museum	Total 74	<i>Profile of Jackie Menzies.</i> H. Feltham <i>Lorraine Lee's work for the wall.</i> L. Mitchell <i>Hedda Morrison 1908-1991.</i> C. Roberts <i>Dress and textiles.</i> J. Sanders
Australian War Memorial	Total 35	<i>The coming of the Irish orphan girls to the Southern Tablelands, March 1850.</i> Richard Reid <i>That famine is pressing each day more heavily upon them: The emigration of Irish convict families to NSW 1848-1852.</i> Richard Reid
National Museum of Australia	Total 16 In production 9	<i>A new project on women scientists.</i> R. Lane <i>Museum collects women scientists.</i> R. Lane <i>Olive Muriel Pink 1884-75.</i> J. Marcus <i>Women's cricket collections.</i> M. Stell <i>Women's political history — A Guide to Sources.</i> M. Sawyer
Museum of Victoria	Total 73 Human Studies 14 Science/technology 5 Natural sciences 54	<i>Women's work: Aboriginal women's artefacts in the Museum of Victoria.</i> Aboriginal Studies Dept <i>Museums: Are you using one?</i> L. Dale <i>Work in the home education Kit.</i> L. Dale, J. Barnard, N. Murphy, D. Tyler <i>Health ephemera in the history collection at the Museum of Victoria.</i> L. Dale
Tasmanian Museum	Total 35	<i>Julie Stoneman: Potter.</i> J.C. Clark
Western Australian Museum	Natural sciences 120 * Majority devoted to maritime archaeology.	

ourselves as harvesting machines and power looms, yet we know almost nothing of their history. (Cowan, 1979: 30-32).

An annual sample of publications from major Australian museums gives credence to Cowan's argument. (Table 1) An historically induced orientation to natural history research is indicated at the Queensland Museum, the Australian Museum, the Museum of Victoria, the Tasmanian Museum and the Western Australian Museum.

*The Difficulty of Representing Domestic Work.* Representing women's domestic work is chal-



lenging because domestic work is invisible — made so by a gendered view of 'work' which perceives such activities as unskilled, trivial and of lowly status. That women's domestic work is more about processes and social relations than production of goods is also problematic. The repetitive nature of domestic work where chores are never-ending, never done, also exacerbates the 'invisibility' of women's work and presents a challenge to interpretation techniques that rely on static displays and artefactual materials. A further difficulty for museum interpretations is how to present the drudgery, routineness, extent and exploitation of much of women's work. As Margaret Anderson and Kylie Winkworth write:

Another clue to the invisibility of women's work lies in the nature of repetitive tasks and in the production of goods with a brief 'shelf life'. A lifetime's washing and cooking leaves no monuments.' (Anderson & Winkworth, 1991: 150).

Consider the difficulty of depicting the conditions of work as described by Beverley Kingston in her account of women's domestic work in the late 1880s:

She [the domestic servant] was required to rise between 6 and 6.30am (except on washing day when she rose at 4am), clean the passages, kitchen and dining room before breakfast, light or stoke the fire, prepare and serve breakfast. After breakfast was cleared away she would clean, wash, or iron depending on the day of the week, prepare and serve luncheon for 1pm and clear it away. She might have the afternoon to herself until 4pm when preparation for dinner was commenced, but she might also be required to finish work left over from the morning, run errands, mind children, mend or sew. If dinner was served at 6pm, she might be through the washing up and removing the coffee tray from the sitting room as recommended by 7.30pm. Thereafter, she was free to go out if given permission, but expected to be home and in bed by 10pm ... If the household contained children, there would be considerably more work over longer hours, and if the family were given to entertaining, it would not be possible to finish work by anything like 7.30pm every evening. It should be noticed that no time was allowed for days off, even at weekends, although considerate families were expected to allow plenty of time for church going on Sundays. (Kingston, 1975: 31-32).

#### SUBORDINATION — MARGINALISATION — STEREOTYPING

Where women are visible in museums, it is how they are positioned and represented, both spatially within the museum itself and within display contexts, that constructs meanings about women, their roles and their value within society. Few would disagree with the premise that museum representations construct meaning about society in general, but as Gaby Porter has argued,

museum representations also have a gendered nature.

Representations of femininity serve to bolster and confirm the main/male story of progress and achievement. Masculinity and femininity are constructed in a series of opposites — work and home, productive labour and pastimes, active and passive, culture and nature — in which 'woman' is the subordinate partner. (Porter, 1991: 160).

In Australia many museum displays focus on stereotypical images of pioneering women which confirms Porter's argument.

*Pioneering Women.* Popular museum displays depict the pioneer housewife in her colonial kitchen, fashionably-decorated parlour, or make-shift slab hut. Evaluating how such displays represent women's interests and roles reveals a range of stereotypical images which excludes Aborigines, non-Anglo-Saxon, twentieth century, urban, single, working, unemployed, poor, prostitute and convict women.

The pioneering woman is often found in provincial or community museums. The period is usually late nineteenth century, or at least pre-electric, thus localising 'pioneering' to a particular period rather than seeing it as an ongoing activity in Australia. Women's interests are assumed to reside in evidence of women's 'work' — examples of needlework, sewing and costume, cooking implements, kitchen or sometimes parlour backgrounds or at least inside the home.

Women are most often represented as 'civilising' influences on the stereotyped 'bushman' and 'women's things' in museum displays draw out this contrast. Museum organisers like to display items such as delicately and finely-embroidered purses, best lace gloves, ornate fans etc., alongside and in contrast to mining tools, farm equipment, and crudely fashioned bush furniture. Organising objects in this way re-constructs popular perceptions of women's place in the past, and in consequence, in the present. Many small community history museums favour this static style of display where objects are ranged along classificatory lines with row upon row of similar or associated items spatially divided along gendered interest lines. Typifying this approach is the historical display at the Gympie Gold Mining Museum (Queensland). Along one wall are 'women's' items represented by collections of fine china, clocks, samplers, family Bibles, sewing machines, kitchenware — many items obviously 'decorative' and ornamental but all implying refinement, taste, cleanliness and good-housewifery. Against the opposite wall are ob-

jects relating to 'men's work' — augers, mining tools and equipment, farm implements, barbed wire, a gun case, and mineral samples — all utilitarian objects that connote austerity, hard work, ingenuity, and a basic life-style.

An excellent example of this 'civilising influence' represented through aural rather than artefactual evidence may be found in the Slab Hut display at the Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame. As the visitor enters a reproduction of a Slab Hut, an anonymous woman's voice starts to relate her experiences of the outback. She refers to hardship, to the loneliness of the bush when her man is away seeking work (shades of Lawson's *Drovers' Wife*) but looks forward to the coming of other women in the area in the hope that their presence will bring about a school for the children and a softening of the harsh and lonely life.

Such reconstructions of pioneering life conjure up images of battlers, hardship, and womanly sacrifice, but they also carry more questionable messages. There are assumptions, if not explicit in images, at least implied by the assemblage of objects used to represent these women, that they were of Anglo-Celtic stock, mothers, wives and hard workers who confined themselves to hearth and home. These stereotypical assumptions obscure the fact that women on the frontier represented different classes, cultures and races and ignore the diversity of lived experiences — from manual labour on the farm, prostitution, droving with the men, to managing a range of commercial activities or living comfortably as wives or mistresses of men of wealth and high social standing.

#### COLLECTIONS AND DISPLAYS

A second area of concern has been gender bias in collecting policies — a bias evolving out of history, collection management techniques and contemporary societal values.

##### *Legacies of History.*

According to the documentary record museums were conceived and begun by men. In the Museum Golden Age of the nineteenth century they collected and exhibited objects to improve the practice of male artisans, and to impress everyone with male creativity and ingenuity. As a result museums have been very masculinist and object-focused until very recently. (Clark, 1992: 6).

Collections in Australian museums had a primary interest in geology and natural history; they gradually incorporated ethnography and the history of science and technology. Social history has been a relative late-comer. Historical collections in museums are dominated by machinery, scientific instruments, weapons, industrial tools,

and militaria, representing the earlier interest in the history of sciences and technology.

Museum collections also reflect the changing preoccupations not only of museums but of the dominant culture; preoccupations with land, progress and technological development, the 'native problem' and war. Thus, items made and used by men predominate. Items made and used by women have been less likely to be collected.

The surge in social history and subsequent concentration on 'history from below' has revealed gaps in the holdings of material culture associated with the working classes and marginalised groups, particularly women's objects. The material culture representing such classes and groups was, and still is, more likely to be worn out during use. Historically, museums have also tended to base their acquisition policies on aesthetic qualities or evidence of technological development. Even today, museums continue to apply a 'conservative tradition of connoisseurship' to artefacts that have strong social history credentials (Winkworth, 1991: 126). Nor have many museums actively researched and provenanced their collections of 'Australiana' (Winkworth, 1991). With women's lives so intimately linked to the material culture of the everyday, it is therefore important that, if the full range of Australian women's lives is to be represented in museums, fresh perspectives need to be developed and new techniques of 'reading the past' adopted to bridge the gaps in collections of artefacts.

*Collections Management.* Classificatory techniques in museum collecting practices can also be problematic for dealing with representations of women and domestic life. Gaby Porter argued that the prevalent classifications for social and local history museums in the UK are:

hierarchical systems organised around spheres of use, and cutting vertically into activities within each sphere according to their special and distinctive artefacts, tools, skills and products. The domestic sphere is separated from other spheres and in particular is set apart from, in antithesis to, working activity.

As a result,

... It becomes almost impossible to look at the job of house-work as a whole, at the range of tasks done by one person, including shopping and often childcare. Again, all activities within the home are assumed to be for consumption by the family: the classification makes no distinction between paid and unpaid work done at home, and locates productive work clearly outside the home. (Porter, 1988: 111).

An historical undervaluing of the work of women means that household items, women's possessions, machinery used by women, and

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An historical undervaluing of the work of women means that household items, women's possessions, machinery used by women, and

TABLE 2. Employment in Cultural Industries and Museums. (Extrapolated from A.B.S. Work in Selected Culture/Leisure Activities, Australia, March 1993, and unpublished data on Museums).

SURVEY OF CULTURE AND LEISURE 12 MONTHS ENDING MARCH 1991 EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF PERSONS INVOLVED IN CULTURE AND LEISURE ACTIVITIES AND MUSEUMS - AUSTRALIA ( '000)			
Characteristics	Males	Females	Persons
Museums Sector:			
Employed full time	8.2	3.6	11.8
Employed part time	1.1	3.7	4.8
Total employed	9.3	7.3	16.6

tators. As Table 2 shows, women accounted for only 30% of museum workers in full-time employment but 77% of those in part-time employment. The percentage who chose to work part time is not known.

More indicative figures are available from the Annual Reports of museums, particularly now that major institutions are publishing staff statistics to meet Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) requirements. Selected 1992/93 reports from institutions including these data reveal that, overall, women represent just below 50% in most institutions but below 42% at both the War Memorial and the South Australian Museum. A more critical consideration, however, is the higher numbers of women employed at the lower-paid administrative and clerical grades, and the lower proportions in the higher positions. For example, although the Powerhouse Museum records fairly equitable ratios between men and women at most levels, at the highest administrative level (above Grade 12), the percentage of women falls to 33%. At the Australian Museum only 10% of staff at this grade are women.

A 1983 survey of 609 U.K. museums found that women formed 34% of museum staff but were concentrated in particular areas: in the curatorial area they tended to be found in costume and arts departments, and in other areas of the museum, were concentrated in education, clerical, cleaning and support facilities. Men, on the other hand, dominated the positions of directors, departmental heads, technical and attendant roles. Volunteer staff were predominantly women (Porter, 1988: 105).

The Museums Association in the U.K. has been collecting data and publishing national surveys of British museums since the mid 1980s, including statistics on male/female staff in museums. In 1989, David Prince looked at this data alongside national statistics on women in employment, to

provide a summary picture of the position of women in museums (Prince: 1988). The data reveal that women represent from 12-14% of the total full-time workforce employed in museums whilst men represent 86-88% depending on the type of museum, and, in respect to earnings, male staff dominate the employment profile (Table 3).

#### CAREER PATHS

Again, quantitative data are slim. What information is available indicates that the museum profession is one where few women have made it to the top. However, there are now several major institutions which have appointed a woman to the position of Director — the National Museum of Australia is headed up by Dr Margaret Coldrake, and at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Patricia Sabine has been appointed Director. Nevertheless, as the organisation charts of major institutions reveal, most senior executive positions are held by men. In part, this pattern can be explained by women's position in society in general and the professions more particularly, the conservative nature of museum administrations, boards of trustees and government departments, as well as the relatively low turnover of staff at such institutions.

Modern business enterprises are increasingly moving toward more flexible working arrangements such as job sharing, flexible working hours, part-time and casual work. Their appeal to women has been well understood and taken advantage of by museum administrations as has been shown by an increasing reliance being placed on volunteer staff. The Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Management Plan of the Australian Museum notes the Museum's support for EEO principles and argues that their implementation has benefits for the institution and individuals with recruitment of the best people, provision of fair and equal treatment and equal opportunity for training and advancement. Objectives include performance appraisal, introduction of enterprise bargaining, and procedures for career enrichment, training and development, grievance resolution, handling multicultural and Aboriginal representation and job opportunities, as well as the establishment of policies on child care and the disabled.

#### DECISION-MAKING

Museum policies are not only the product of internal processes and decisions, they are also determined by Boards of Trustees, government

ministers and departments — with the latter holding the purse strings!

At the apex of museum structures are the governing Boards or Councils. The Annual Reports of major institutions reveal greater gender equity is being achieved at this level in some institutions. In many small museums it has been claimed that women do the work while men make the decisions and are repaid with recognition or through men's networking systems. However, generalisations are difficult given the diversity of museum structures and differential power relations within various communities. In these important areas of cultural policy there is an obvious need for further research.

### NEW DIRECTIONS

The previous section has reviewed the major criticisms that have been made of museums from the point of view of women's civic rights and concerns. Of course, many of these criticisms are now recognised by museums and, although the reality may often lag behind the rhetoric, there are now many instances of more equitable policies being formulated and put into place.

#### DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN FORMAL INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANISATIONS

Women in museums have mobilised to address the problems, gaps and silences, and 'glass ceilings' they perceive to exist in these institutions. Feminist scholarship and new 'angles of vision' are being applied to museum operations and their output and the empowerment of women is increasingly a topic of museum discourse. The momentum is spreading globally and Australian museum workers have been to the fore in this campaign.

#### IN AUSTRALIA:

*Women's Section of Museums Association of Australia (MAA)*. Formed in 1988, the Women's Section has met annually at CAMA/MAA conferences (now Museums Australia Inc.). The Section has established regional groups in all States to act as advocacy and pressure groups and to address issues relating to women in museums on a national basis. Its specific aims are:

- To provide a forum to facilitate communication on a range of issues concerning women in museums;
- To develop programs and initiatives to address these issues;

TABLE 3. Numbers and Proportions of Male and Female Staff Within Defined Salary Bands, 1985 (Source: Museums Data-Base (Original Survey) (1987), Quoted in Prince, 1988: 55-60)

Band (Pounds Stg)	Males %	Females %	Females as % of Total
3000 or less	0.9	4.1	50.9
3000-5000	4.5	11.1	38.0
5001-7000	77.8	59.4	15.5
70001-9000	7.8	12.4	27.7
9001-11000	3.9	7.4	31.6
11001-13000	1.9	3.3	29.3
13001-15000	1.2	0.9	15.1
15001-17000	1.1	0.6	11.7
17001-19000	0.3	0.2	17.2
19001-21000	0.2	0.1	11.8
21000 +	0.4	0.1	7.1

- To act as a lobby group to advance the representation of women in museums; and
- To enhance the profession's understanding of and support for women's issues in museums.

At the 1991 CAMA Conference, the Women's Section adopted a set of resolutions centred around intensifying women's lobbying and advocacy efforts, monitoring employment opportunities for women in museums, establishing and extending a networking system, and developing a feminist critique of museum activities (displays, language, employment etc). The Section is currently planning an occupational audit of women in museums and art galleries.

*National Museum of Australia*. In 1993 the National Museum of Australia hosted a conference, 'Images of Women', which drew together women (and a handful of men) from museums, politics, universities, the performing arts and other professions. A major objective of the conference was to enable museum professionals to consult with the wider community on how women should be represented in museums. From a series of workshops which discussed topics ranging from multiculturalism and Aboriginality, to career development, sexuality, disabilities, work, sports and leisure and city/country issues, over fifty resolutions were adopted. Among these were recommendations that the National Museum sponsor a working party of representatives from museums, the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia and the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, to develop guidelines for community consultations and networking; that the Council of Australian Museums Associations



develop policies to recommend to their constituent museums which address both gender and ethnicity in collecting, public programs and staffing; that the full spectrum of women's achievements should be represented in the appropriate context; that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women should be involved in decision-making on what should be put in museums; and that a dialogue between sporting bodies and museums be established.

#### OVERSEAS:

*WHAM (Women, Heritage and Museums)*. This group was formed in the UK in 1984 for women and men who wished to:

- Promote positive images of women through museum collecting, exhibitions and activities;
- Encourage informed museum practice through training seminars, resource lists, etc. in relation to women's contribution to society;
- Publicise museums as places where women's heritage can be studied and enjoyed;
- Provide a wider forum for the exchange of ideas and sharing of information on women's heritage;
- Campaign for equal employment in museums and related fields through changes in work.
- Initiate debate and respond to relevant issues through the press and to professional organisations etc.
- Combat racism and discrimination on grounds of disability, age or sexual orientation, as these issues affect women, whether as museum workers, users or as women represented by museums.

*USA*. In 1986 the Smithsonian Institution and the Ford Foundation sponsored a national conference, *Women's Changing Roles in Museums*, which looked at the changing roles of women in society and in museums. In 1990, *Gender Perspectives: The Impact of Women on Museums*, was convened at the Smithsonian Institution. Stated objectives of the conference were to: examine women's historical impact on museums; share experiences that show how gender perspectives have a significant effect on museum's scholarly and educational pursuits; identify societal and technological changes in museums that affect women; assess scholarly, educational, and leadership roles for women as museums professionals; and look to museums of the future for the effect of gender perspectives (Glaser & Zenetou, 1994: xxiii).

*UNESCO*. During 1990 a workshop on Women and Museums was held in Copenhagen, and the following year a special issue of UNESCO's publication, 'Museum', was dedicated to women in museums. From the workshop, the following agreements were adopted as part of a strategy of action:

On the importance of on-going activities for raising the profile and status of women in museums and on the value of maintaining and extending national, regional and international networks.

On the need to build on the constituency of women in museums and museum organisations, including steps to formulate policies for women.

To raise gender awareness among women and men and to stress the need to include women in all public museum programs, and maintain critical awareness of the images presented.

To use the resources of our museums to build collections, to plan, design and show exhibitions, and to provide programs which address women in the arts and sciences as well as women's history, and to give access to museum resources to women outside the museums as well as to those of the staff.

#### STRATEGIES WITHIN MUSEUMS

There are now many well-documented attempts to find new ways of representing women in museums. But the display activities of museums cannot be separated from other areas of museum work, in particular collections and research policies. Some museums have shown commitment to women's concerns by drawing up policy documents in these areas with specific attention to women's material culture.

*Representation*. Some curators and display planners are seeking to overcome stereotyping and generic women in displays by

*Recovering women's pasts*: More representative displays that recover women's pasts are slowly appearing in mainstream museums, partly as a reaction to criticism, and partly brought about and made possible by the changes noted below.

*Exploring women's lives*: Instead of focussing on typical 'women's work, the finer things in life, or offering nostalgic images of the past that avoid unpleasant, political or mundane aspects of the past, some exhibition planners are attempting to represent the totality of women's experiences.

*Individualising displays*: Presenting stories about individuals rather than depicting the lives of anonymous, imaginary figures can go a long way to addressing the problem of stereotyping. Turning the historical bias from colonial to more recent periods for which a greater selection of historical material is available, either in the form of artefacts or documentary evidence, may facilitate and encourage more displays of individuals.



FIG. 1. Temporary display, *Thrift*, Pioneer Women's Hut, Tumbarumba, NSW. (Photo courtesy of the Pioneer Women's Hut).

Exploring diversity: New approaches are being made by acknowledging the historical diversity of women's interests from home to work-place, from artistic to entrepreneurial, from child care to the political arena, and by attempting to break down barriers between gendered divisions of labour, creativity and values.

New forms of evidence: The presentation of more individuals or examples of women's lives is being made possible through oral histories, paper-based material (photographs, letters, diaries, written records, journals, accounts), projects between museums, historical groups, libraries and archives, and extending primary research into the community.

*Collections, Research, Exhibition Techniques.* The nexus between museum displays and museum practices associated with collections acquisition, management, research and interpretation has been noted. Such practices are underpinned by traditional museum principles (the priority of the object, classifying artefacts in terms of their evolutionary development, etc) and interrelated disciplinary theoretical bases. All

these aspects of museums are currently being debated, questioned and challenged — both from within museum structures and in the wider arena.

Feminist perspectives: Feminist critiques of museum practices, accompanied by an increasing feminisation of history departments within museums as women move into curatorial roles, are enabling women's perspectives to be developed, and a greater awareness and sensitivity to be displayed. This can extend from redressing offensive or sexist language in labelling, to re-evaluating collections and mounting displays around women's interests, or including women in more equitable representations and, more importantly, developing policies to redress a masculinist museum culture. One strand of feminism suggests a major contribution women can make to museum work is their non-hierarchical, interactive mode of thinking (Keller, 1985; Tucker, 1994: 45). In a similar vein, Heather Paul has called for museum women to become the 'peripheral visionaries' for museums — those who ask new questions, offer new interpretations and offer a more holistic and lateral way of think-



FIG. 2. Temporary display, *Caring for Clothes*, Pioneer Women's Hut, Tumbarumba, NSW. (Photo courtesy of the Pioneer Women's Hut).

ing in contrast to traditional linear patterns more characteristic of men (Paul, 1994: 124).

**Museum Policies:** Numerous museums have already put into effect internal policy directives on collections, public programs, research and education that reflect a commitment to improving the representation of women's issues and concerns and the redressing of masculine biases in long-established museum practices. The National Museum has a Women's Collecting Policy, the Museum of Victoria a Collection Policy on Domestic and Community Life whilst the Migration Museum includes gender considerations in all its policy statements. The Museum of Victoria policy notes four main areas of focus: work and living in the home, childhood and nurturing, leisure, and other activities based in local neighbourhoods and communities. This policy has been developed to respond to the need for a new interpretation and understanding of unpaid work (including child birth, child rearing and community work) and other leisure and work experiences (Museum of Victoria History Group Collection Policies).

**Critical Culture:** A more critical approach is being established among museum workers in respect to both exhibitions and museum practices in general. We now see in museum literature an occasional review of exhibitions for gender content although the level still falls far short of adequate. Internal reviews of museum projects — exhibitions and public programs — for gender equity and cultural diversity are not only being advocated, but put into place in some institutions. In Australia the Migration Museum not only includes gender considerations in general policy but

is still the only museum in Australia to have a specific and explicit policy of reflecting women's history and culture in all exhibitions. It is also the only Australian museum to have adopted a specifically feminist analytical framework in its exhibitions (Anderson, 1993: 7-8).

In the United States, the National Museum of American History, has, as a result of the 1990 national seminar on women in museums, initiated a group to consider gender equity in exhibitions. Its slide program, *Toward Gender Equity in Exhibitions*, deals with ways of expressing women's experiences and aspirations (Glaser & Zenetou,



FIG. 3. Collection of bush quilts, Pioneer Women's Hut, Tumbarumba, NSW. (Photo courtesy of the Pioneer Women's Hut).

1994: xxi). However, as early as 1976, the New York State Museum had established an internal gender equity committee to examine and advise on exhibit themes, linguistics and exhibition design. To ensure gender equity in exhibitions, programs and publications, this advisory group recommended a series of criteria for evaluating the output of the museum (Appendix 1). Although these criteria were framed nearly two decades ago, they are still valid today.

**Re-interpretation of Existing Collections:** Gender-blindness is not only endemic to the public but may also be found among museum workers, as Barbara Smith recounts. When viewing a display covering the lives of several eighteenth-century individuals which included 'period rooms, furnishings, pots, pans, toys, spinning wheels, costume and jewellery, artisan tools, and ceramic wares', she commented that the exhibit lacked attention to women's history and was told this was because there were no artefacts available pertaining to women! (Smith, 1994: 141). This incident illustrates the need for re-interpreting existing collections from a women's perspective. Such re-interpretation is, of course,

dependent on further, women's oriented, research. In this spirit, both the Museum of Victoria and the Powerhouse Museum have been reassessing their historical collections of domestic technology in order to find new ways of interpreting these objects so as to more adequately reflect women's history.

**Inclusive or Separatist Approach?** The concept of gender-specific museums is a product of the women's movement and has generated debates about the wisdom of a separatist approach compared to equal representation within existing museums. Some argue there is a danger that women's invisibility will only be further entrenched with an inclusive approach. Others argue that equality of representation can only be achieved when men and women are shown interacting together in museum displays. Another argument against gender-specific museums is that they tend to create ghettos. On the other hand, it is also claimed that women's museums enhance consciousness raising, instil self-esteem and keep women's museum concerns on the agenda until a better gender balance can be achieved in





FIG. 4. Selection of the display *Never Done*, Pioneer Women's Hut, Tumbarumba, NSW. (Photo courtesy of the Pioneer Women's Hut).

mainstream and traditional museums (Skjoth, 1991: 125). Gender-specific museums are, however, few and far between. Museum (1991) listed nine women's museums in Denmark, Ecuador, France, Germany (2), Greece, and the United States (3). Some of the women's museums, including an Australian project, the Pioneer Women's Hut at Tumbarumba, are discussed below.

## CASE STUDIES

### AUSTRALIAN MUSEUMS

#### WOMEN'S MUSEUMS

*Women's Hut*. Tumbarumba, NSW. This was the first museum in Australia devoted to women's interests. The small community-run museum is situated at Glenroy, about 8 km from Tumbarumba in southern New South Wales. In 1988 it won national acclaim in the Bicentennial Museum of the Year awards as an 'outstanding small museum in which research and collections combine well to provide a fascinating picture of the lives and

skills of rural women in Australia' (Women's Hut promotional material). From an expectation that the Hut's collection would include 'important' objects, several local women decided to take another direction. This resulted in a policy to build a picture of ordinary rural life and so raise the self-esteem of women by depicting their everyday lives as parts of Australian history. Strategies to achieve this include:

- ... concentrating on ordinary objects, and researching everyday lives of rural women;

- ... encouraging local women and their families to retain objects relating to their own heritage by handing on their past to their children and making it relevant to their lives;

- ... creating links with young rural women (town and country) so that they become aware of the significance of their personal history and that of their families, and to show that history isn't exclusive to the rich and famous. (The Women's Hut — Aims).

Since opening in 1985, the Women's Hut has built a collection of about 1600 objects, published 3 books on the histories of local women, and provided simple conservation advice and encouragement to people to retain artefacts. In the ever deepening rural crisis, museum organisers



FIG. 5. The 1920s kitchen in the ... *never done* exhibition, The Powerhouse Museum, Sydney. (Photo courtesy of The Powerhouse Museum).

perceive an integral and ongoing role for the museum:

Small country towns are isolated, the second family car has gone, there is very little work and few of the support services for the unemployed found in cities and major rural centres. Probably the majority of country women no longer make butter, bake bread or even bottle fruit so this domestic framework that often provided status for women is also no longer there. Self esteem of young women is often at an all time low. We are not primarily looking to direct involvement by young women in the pioneer Women's Hut but rather to community based projects with an Australian, local and personal history underlay. (Pioneer Women's Hut History, Aims and Implementation — personal correspondence).

Exhibition space in the Women's Hut is allocated to various aspects of women's domestic lives: Keeping Warm, Coping with Flies, Caring for Clothes, and Time for Fancywork. These displays reflect the Museum's commitment to documenting the rural experience and totality of women's lives. (Figs 1-4).

*National Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame.* Late in 1994 this museum opened in its temporary home, the former Alice Springs courthouse. The museum commemorates women who are

pioneers in their fields (domestic, occupation, rural and urban). Its long term objectives are: to establish a public museum and art gallery to pay tribute to pioneer women; to assemble, exhibit and preserve a collection of pioneer women's relics, antiques, artefacts and memorabilia; to develop a research library of pioneer women's literature, historical records and manuscripts; to promote knowledge and understanding by the Australian community of the roles of pioneer women; and to foster research into the roles played by Australian pioneer women.

*Women's Place.* Brisbane. Only a concept at this stage, the objective is to establish a national centre dedicated to celebrating women's place in the building of Australia. Using a grant from the National Agenda for Women, the group has already compiled a data base on Queensland women's history which it has lodged with the John Oxley Library, Brisbane.

#### EXHIBITIONS AT GENERAL MUSEUMS

*Just Housewives and Mothers.* (1989/90). This was a temporary display at the Albert Park Branch



FIG. 6. Temporary display, *Women of the West*, Queensland Museum, Brisbane. (Photo courtesy of the Queensland Museum).

of the South Melbourne Library produced by staff of the Museum of Victoria and students of La Trobe University. The project was based on an oral history project about women's domestic and community lives in South Melbourne.

*Never Done. Women's Work in the Home.* (1988-), Powerhouse Museum. This was one of the first major permanent exhibitions in Australian museums to take a women's perspective. Built on the museum's collection of domestic technology, the display examines the history of domestic work in Australia around the themes of sewing, cooking, baking and laundry work. It is 'an engaging, thoughtful exhibition which appears to be popular with its audience. It treats women's history and domestic history seriously and gives modern women the chance to reflect on their own daily routines in the light of past experience' (Anderson, 1993). An interesting contrast is made between pioneering housework in a bush hut and that of the 1920s with one section devoted to washday in the 1800s and another section featuring a 1920s suburban kitchen. However, underlying the theme of 'never done' are messages, consistent with the

philosophy of the institution, of technological progress. These are evident not only in the organisation of contrasts but explicitly portrayed on the black and white television program displayed in the 1950s kitchen. This runs a continuous program showing advertisements for new domestic technologies that will make housework 'easier' than in the past. (Fig. 5).

*Trust the Women — Women in the Federal Parliament.* Parliament House, Canberra. Through paintings, photographs, artefacts, letters and documents, this exhibition charts the work and achievements of women in the Federal Parliament. The exhibition covers two themes — women's right to vote and the election of women parliamentarians — by exploring the Suffragette movement, the late entry of women into parliament, and the peaking of the women's movement in the 1970s. The focus of the exhibition is on the work of women's groups, and the social and geographical factors that have impeded women's march towards full political expression and participation. A centrepiece of the display is Dora Meeson's 'Trust the Women' Women's Suffrage



FIG. 7. Temporary display, *Women of the West*, Queensland Museum, Brisbane. (Photo courtesy of the Queensland Museum).

Banner of 1908. (Exhibition Catalogue; Young, 1992: 7-8).

*On the Go — Women Adventurers from the '20s and 30s.* (1993), Tasmanian Museum, Hobart and Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston. This was a joint project with the National Museum of Australia. The display celebrated women's contributions to bushwalking in Tasmania. It recorded women who joined the movement, adapted men's walking gear before specific bushwalking and camping wear became available, pioneered new routes, led trips and made their mark overseas in Europe and New Zealand. The collection has now been transferred to the National Museum as part of that institution's project to collect materials revealing the diversity of women's lives in Australia.

*Mum Stayed Home.* (Touring exhibition by Women's Hut/Albury Regional Museum/Albury Regional Art Centre). This exhibition about 'ordinary Mums' who lived and raised families in Australia during the 1950s provided more than a nostalgic trip into the past. Using artefacts and art works, the exhibition told about the lives of four women from different socio-economic back-

grounds — Els Jacobs who migrated from Holland during the 1950s, Euphemia Mullett who spent the 1950s living in bush camps, Norma McQualter from a typical middle-class background and Patricia Parker who came from a working-class family and who, throughout her life and work, was closely involved with political groups. Through the lives of these women the display looked at images of mums created by the media and explored broader issues about Motherhood, Wonder Mums, Art and Decoration and, as Sharon Veale has commented, through revealing the experiences of these women the exhibition was partly able to counteract the characteristic assessments of the fifties as a period of consumption, modernity and relative affluence. (Exhibition brochure, Northey: 1992, Veale, 1994: 18).

*The Glory Box — A Chest Full of Hopes and Dreams.* (1992), Lilydale Museum. In an exhibition based on oral histories, personalised stories about glory boxes were used to explore gender roles, social structures and attitudes, and marital experiences in Australia during the 1930s and 1940s. Exhibition planners found

As the women's stories began to take pride of place so did their domestic objects. Doilies, tablecloths and



FIG. 8. *Women Aviators*, Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame and Outback Heritage Centre, Longreach. (Photo courtesy of the Stockman's Hall of Fame and Outback Heritage).

pillowcases spoke of skills learned, of patience, dreams and expectations. (McFadzean, 1992: 8).

Although the exhibition was a local community project which drew on the experiences of residents of the region, it used these to explore the selectivity of history and to make statements about Australian society in general.

*Fair Game: The Cultural Connections of Sport in South Australia*. (1992-1993), Migration Museum, SA. This display depicted the history of sport and included women's involvement in, and exclusion from, sport as well as showing contemporary attitudes, roles and participation of women in sporting events and their roles as 'washers of sports gear, brewers of tea and bakers of cakes' and as spectators (Anderson, 1993).

*Strictly Black*. (1989), Migration Museum, SA. The topic of this costume display was the connection between dress, gender and culture. The display drew out some of the contradictory attitudes that exist about women through the vehicle of dress and 'challenged its audience to consider the multiple uses of dress in society, as sign and

symbol as well as functional item' (Anderson, 1993: 124).

*Votes for women 1894-1928*, and *The Decade for Women*. (1981) and (1985), South Australian Constitutional Museum (now Old Parliament House, SA). The first exhibition covered the campaign for women's suffrage in South Australia and the United Kingdom, and the second featured the activities of non-government women's organisations from 1975 to 1985.

*Women and the Humanities*. (1986), National Library of Australia. A small display including items from the Anne Summers women's liberation collections, some items relating to women involved in Australian politics (Dame Enid Lyons, Vida Goldstein, Adele Pankhurst Walsh etc) and other material related to birth control, equal pay and conscription.

*Women of Worth*. Jewish Museum of Victoria. This exhibition on women and Judaism, explored concepts of womanhood in different traditions, including topics of marriage, sexuality and contradictions between traditional and modern concepts and impact on Jewish culture. Lectures,



symposium and performance activities were held in conjunction with this exhibition.

*Jewish Women in History.* A.M. Rosenblum, Jewish Museum of the Great Synagogue, Sydney. A small exhibition which has toured to several locations focused on particular women in Jewish history and depicting Jewish communities from women's perspectives. Different historical periods were represented — Biblical, Spanish Inquisition, German Enlightenment, nineteenth century Australia, an Eastern Europe village pre World War II and contemporary.

*Ellis Rowan: A Flower Painter in Queensland.* (1989), Queensland Museum. The exhibition of Ellis Rowan's paintings also covered her life and travels and revealed the character and personality of this strong-minded woman who, until recently, has been ignored by historians. The exhibition toured Australia.

*Women of the West.* (1995), Queensland Museum. This temporary (3-5 years) and touring exhibition deals with the interaction between women and the 'west' (the environment and society of rural districts and country towns) and explores this relationship through objects and photographs evocative of the range of women's experiences in 'the bush'. The exhibition explores the propositions that 'the west' is both a place and a state of mind; that there is a difference between the understanding and perception of 'the west' generated within the area itself and the understanding and perceptions imposed and interpreted from 'outside'; and that regional factors are important in defining women's experiences. (Figs 6-7).

*Women Aviators.* Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame and Outback Heritage Centre. The display honours those women who became heroes of the air. In doing so it also compliments contiguous displays — those devoted to pioneers (male) who have helped to modernise the outback and those featuring technologies that are changing the work and leisure patterns of rural life. *Women Aviators* is a small display that tends to be obscured by the crush of display panels, models and audio visual terminals located on the upper level of the exhibition hall. However, its inclusion does suggest that efforts are being made to increase the visibility of women in the Hall's display spaces. (Fig. 8).

*Absence of Evidence.* (June 1994), Fremantle Prison. The project brought together visual artists, performers and writers in a collaborative research project to produce a 6-week long event that combined exhibition, performances, read-

ings and a 1-day seminar. The project was directed at investigating the lives of women in two historical sites — the Lunatic Asylum (and later Old Women's Home) and the Female Division of the Fremantle Prison (now an Arts Centre and tourist site). Its more specific aims were to re-inscribe the absent spaces of these two sites; to engage in an imaginative reconstruction of personal histories in such a way as to explore the limits of the art exhibition as well as the constraints of object-based museum displays, and to explore how these places of incarceration were not just sites of repression but of the production of dominant social norms.

*Women in Prison.* (forthcoming), Fremantle Prison. An exhibition on women in prison will be developed as part of a research project funded by a West Australian History Foundation grant. The project will focus on the Female Division at Fremantle Prison and will target oral history and archival records. It will examine the premise that prison has been a primary site for the separation of the 'masculine' and the 'feminine', particularly through the interaction of space and people in the everyday routines of prison life.

*Keeping Culture Strong: Women's Work in Aboriginal Australia.* (1992), Museum of Victoria. This was the Museum's first exhibition on Aboriginal women. Its aim was to demonstrate the vitality and diversity of Aboriginal women's culture. The exhibition concentrated on three regions: South Eastern, Central and Northern Australia and drew on the Museum's extensive collections of both contemporary and historic items from these areas. Koorie women from various groups worked with the museum project team and community consultation and co-operative efforts were involved in exhibition design, access to archives and resource material (videos and oral history material from Aboriginal groups). Special activities — craft demonstrations, films, and lectures by Aboriginal women — further enabled indigenous viewpoints to be expressed, as did the use of first person quotes in many of the display labels.

*Daughters of the Dreaming.* (1989), Museum of Victoria. This photographic exhibition was initiated by a Koorie artist, Mrs Valmai Heap, and developed with the Victorian Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Unit and staff of the Museum of Victoria. Based on the Museum's photographic collections and videos developed in consultation with Aboriginal women in the community, the project was designed to create awareness and

understanding of Aboriginal cultural heritage issues, especially those relating to Aboriginal women, and to highlight the importance of photographs in recording the lives of Aboriginal people. This exhibition later toured Aboriginal communities throughout Victoria and travelled interstate.

#### PUBLIC PROGRAMS, OUTREACH ACTIVITIES, RESEARCH PROJECTS ETC.

The Museum of Victoria has initiated several projects that relate specifically to women's concerns — the projects developed by the Museum's Aboriginal Studies Department already noted, collecting and research in the area of domestic technology and the work of Lisa Dale which looks at women in agriculture. The Museum has produced an Education kit on *Work in the Home* for distribution to senior school students. As part of this oral history project an extensive program of talks to community groups and students was conducted around the theme which also linked into Senior Citizens Week, Heritage Festival and a workshop for the Victorian Home Economics and Textile Teachers Association Biennial Conference.

*Powerhouse (Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences)*. Accompanying the display *Never Done*, is an Exhibition brochure, an educational 'teachers visit pack' of exhibition notes and activity sheets for the same display. Hands on activities for organised school groups are also available.

Also in production is a catalogue of the museum's domestic technology collection, one of Australia's most comprehensive in the area. Planners hope to avoid problems inherent in traditional history classification systems and to focus on domestic labour (paid and unpaid), and on domestic life, to analyse the museum's collection of material culture of domestic work, (Stephen & Webber, 1990).

*National Museum of Australia*. Although still in its 'gestation' stage, the Museum has written a collecting policy for women's history and culture articulating feminist views to ensure that the Museum's collections 'fully document women's lives'. It has also set up a Women's Project encouraging women to donate objects to enable the Museum to document the experiences of all women. Some specific activities under this program include field work in communities in Groote Eylandt and Utopia (NT) to purchase documented collections focusing on contact history and women's history; acquisition of the

Myrtle Wilson collection of needlework; documenting the lives of Australian women scientists and locating them within the wider contexts of their societies; and recording women's experiences in bushwalking and outdoor recreation. This latter project intends to build collections of objects and oral histories that interpret the changing roles of women in these areas; and to identify the connections between women's outdoor recreation and participation in the conservation lobby, nature and scientific study and naming of places.

*The National Maritime Museum*. Mary-Louise Williams writes that

Almost without exception, the staff at the Museum work to challenge the view that maritime museums appeal only to men (Williams, 1990: 38).

Despite a strong emphasis on naval and boating matters, the sections devoted to Passengers and Leisure provide opportunities for inclusive displays in the sub-themes of migration, pleasure cruising, beach life, swimwear etc; whilst in the USA-Australia Gallery a display on War brides makes available the voices of different women through oral and video histories and personal ephemera, (Witcomb, 1993).

#### OVERSEAS MUSEUMS

A review of articles on women in museums around the world suggests a varied agenda, ranging from the maintenance of traditional practices to revolutionary programs and nationalising strategies. Likewise, women's involvement appears to vary from country to country. In the Soviet Union in museums of all sizes and levels and types the majority of museum staff are reportedly women. More surprisingly, women also outnumber men in professional categories and are well represented at director levels. In contrast, a report on Japanese museums indicates only 0.4% of directors are women with as few as 20% of museum professionals being women. Yet women account for nearly 80% of the volunteer staff in Japanese museums.

An account of German museums by Titus Grab, an ethnographer concerned with gender-roles in museums, documents changes brought about by the women's movement since the late 1970s. These he identifies as an awareness that museums are vehicles of both 'anthropocentric traditions' as well as potential media for articulating critical debate, documenting women's history, and creating feminist infrastructures. As a consequence, gender-related initiatives had increased in museums (mostly in temporary exhibitions and

displays) by the mid 1980s, although Grab maintains that German museums still reflect gender-specific divisions of labour with women in 'lower' jobs and men involved with the 'high art', (Grab, 1991: 136-139).

Julia Clark, convenor of the Women's Section of the M.A.A., visited British museums during 1989 and reported:

In 14 weeks in Britain, in which I visited over 100 museums, I found only two exhibitions which gave centre stage to 'girls' stuff. A few made a real effort, but were easily eclipsed by the context of the display and/or institution which were essentially masculinist. This was particularly marked in the north, in the major new museums which had received big slabs of Mrs Thatcher's Urban Renewal funding. Since these were generally post-industrial sites in manufacturing or port towns, they focused on industry and technology in the narrowest sense, that is machines and methods. Women's experience was either absent or peripheral. (Clark, 1992).

Clark went on to describe several exhibitions which did acknowledge women. First, although the major displays of engines, turbines etc. at the new Science and Technology Museum at Manchester ignored women, there was a small space set apart from the main exhibits which housed an 'excellent and innovative' display, 'The Story of Manchester', which recognised the contributions of men and women to the life of the city. She located two other major touring exhibitions on women's work and lives. These were *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery in women's lives 1300-1900*, and *Women and Textiles Today*. The first explored the social, cultural and economic contexts of embroidery to illustrate the development of a hierarchical value system and gendered division of labour in the arts and the latter exhibition continued these themes into the twentieth century (Clark, 1991:135).

Barbara Melosh concluded her review of women's history in various exhibits in the United States during the 1980s as follows:

... These exhibits embody a sensitivity to gender and recognition of female aspiration that illustrate the wide response to at least some feminist claims. At the same time, a pattern of significant omissions reveals a kind of selectivity that amounts to censorship. No Orwellian Ministry of Culture looms over curators; nor do directors and boards commonly issue fiat about what is allowed and what is forbidden. Nevertheless, though few curators would wish to acknowledge it openly, most of us operate under a tacit, perhaps sometimes even unconscious, sense of limits on what can be said. Seldom couched in explicitly political terms, not necessarily ideological in their intentions, these restrictions are nonetheless political in their effects. They find expression in what one might call the language of the museum, the characteristic discourse and modes of representation associated with exhibits. (Melosh, 1989: 204-5).

According to Melosh, the way this 'censorship' works is through: 1, elisions in representations (the avoidance of women's bodies and sexual conflict); 2, a 'tyranny of the happy ending', and an 'implicit code of civility [that] powerfully shapes the content and tone of exhibits' and sets the limits of acceptable dissent; 3, a linguistic style that delimits intellectual interpretation in narrow terms and addresses audiences from a paternalistic interpretation of a museum's public role that is disembodied, authoritative, concealed and results in a 'voice' that conceals historical agency.

One strategy for avoiding such 'hidden' censorship is to assess all exhibitions for gender balance. Another strategy to overcome invisibility is the gender-specific museum, or women's museum.

A few brief details on some of these museums indicate a variety of differing agenda — sometimes celebratory, sometimes directed at changing their immediate society — but all seeing a need for a separate institution to meet women's specific needs.

*Kvindemuseet i Danmark (The Women's Museum), Aarhus, Denmark.* In discussing the museum's first exhibition, *Give Room for Life* (1984), Mogensen describes this as a museum which attempts to

eliminate completely the distance between visitor and exhibition theme. Life-size dolls and custodians dressed to be part of the exhibition recreate a real-life atmosphere. Visiting the Women's Museum was like walking into a private home, where you are allowed to satisfy your curiosity by going through everything; you are not a mere spectator, but a 'true' guest visiting your grandmother's, your mother's or your own youth. (Mogensen, 1988: 23).

The Museum seeks to make women's life and work 'visible and living' by communicating results from research done in women's studies to a wider audience; encouraging women to tell their own stories; and providing opportunities for paid or voluntary work. Apart from displays, the museum has an educational program that includes courses in museum studies, speech technique, drawing, singing, and women's life (present and past). In a region of high female unemployment, the museum sees itself as creating jobs, developing new skills and using old ones. It sees itself as an active agent and focal point whose 'documentation of the past can be used as a means both of reorienting attitudes and behaviour and pointing out different choices for the present and future' (Sandahl, 1991: 172). Jette Sandahl, curator of the museum, claims that, since opening, the museum has contributed to increasing the

visibility of women's history and culture in power structures and the general public; it has reached new audiences; and has become a source of inspiration to women (Sandahl, 1991: 175).

*Fraun-Museum, Wiesbaden, Germany.* Founded in 1984 and sponsored by the Women's Workshop Centre for Communication and Education, its focal points are women in the history of Wiesbaden and women as the carriers of culture. The exhibition philosophy is not to show women in their different situations of life as objects and observation items but to enable each woman visiting the museum to participate 'as active subject of her own history'. Visitors can touch and handle objects, change exhibitions, or add items they find helpful to understanding their own and other women's lives. A range of activities enhance and expand on exhibition strategies: seminars and excursions, guided tours, lectures, as well as research and archive facilities. The Women's Museum attempts to document political, societal and socio-cultural changes, as well as to influence these changes through the activities of the museum.

*The Women's Heritage Museum, Palo Alto, California, USA.* The museum was founded in 1985 and has operated as a 'museum-without-walls'. It aims 'to move women's history out of universities and into the public consciousness' and its guiding principles are listed as:

- To redefine history to incorporate women's perspectives and contributions;
- To portray history with equal emphasis on persons of all races, creeds, cultures, and social and economic status;
- To identify and make known women role models;
- To employ at all times the highest standard of historical and environmental integrity;
- To enhance the understanding of topics by using a comparative approach.

*The Cumbe Women's Museum, Cuenca, Ecuador.* The Casa Cumbe museum grew out of a project for training rural women that included sewing and cooking classes and collective production, and was an initiative of the women themselves. Learning adobe construction to repair the museum building was one of their first projects. Drawing on community museums as a model, the Equadorian women planned their exhibition around 'Our People' with items of value to the women involved. Since then the women have developed micro-enterprises out of the museum project: doll production, raising guinea-pigs, and bread-making. Through their involvement in the museum's development, the lives of the women have changed.

Before Casa Cumbe, the women were very shy: now they will look you in the eye without flinching.

Before, the only social contact for the women of Cumbe was when others dropped in on them at home, now they get together with other women at the museum, they have time to talk, to discuss problems and to solve them together.

Before, some of the women did not have their own businesses; now, with what they have learned and thanks to Casa Cumbe's projects, they have a little income.

Before, the women lacked confidence in financial matters; now they are learning the rudiments of money management.

Before, not many people discussed health and nutrition; now Casa Cumbe invites specialists to talk with the women about these questions.

Before, the women undervalued themselves; now they know that they are equal to men.

Before, they would look down on their traditional crafts and knowledge (which just came naturally, being learned from their mothers); now they know that traditional work (spinning, dying etc) is important because it is part of their history.

Finally, the women of Casa Cumbe now know that there are people who care about them. (de Parra, 1991:169)

*American National Women's Hall of Fame, Seneca Falls, New York.*

Conceived in 1968 and opened in 1979, in the birthplace of the women's movement, the hall celebrates the achievements of notable women — such as Harriet Beecher Stowe, Lucy Stone (women's rights advocate), Barbara McClintock (geneticist) etc. For many women, the American National Women's Hall of Fame may be outdated in its celebratory philosophy, yet it is a unique site that recognises and valorises the activities of women. (Melosh, 1989:188).

These accounts highlight the fact that successful museum operations are those that meet the differentiated needs of their respective communities. Strategies for improving the status of women obviously differ depending on the particular society. As Wendy Hucker of the Pioneer Women's Hut, has written, their museum has shown local farming families, particularly women, that history relates to them and not only to the famous, the rich, men and city people. This museum's aim to be a resource 'for women and about women' and to build interactive links with rural women, especially young women, can be as radicalising for Australian country towns as is the development of living skills for Equadorian women.

## CONCLUSION

The Australian programs listed above represent only a fraction of museum programs around the country. Most are temporary, or take small spaces in large institutions and, as Anderson has argued, ... they scarcely impinge on the overall message of the museum, which continues to be directed to an imagined male audience', (Anderson, 1993: 129).

Even in those museums with female staff committed to raising the profile of women in museums, women may remain 'marginal'.

As the foregoing discussion also illustrates, many museums are looking at ways of responding to charges that they have ignored women's history and women's contributions to cultural, economic and intellectual developments. But much remains to be done. This section looks at ways in which progressive policies already being developed and adopted can be enhanced but, at the same time, acknowledging that changing attitudes within museums rely on a transformation of gender relations outside museums. Museums can take up pro-active positions and begin to lead societal attitudes rather than following tradition. For this, more practical support from those government departments involved with cultural affairs and with employment practices would be fruitful. The structure of museums in Australia suggests a government-driven approach to change is both viable and desirable.

### NEED FOR MORE WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS

The boards or councils of several of our national/state museums are working toward more equitable gender balances and several women have been appointed as chairpersons.

With decision-making occurring within a matrix of administrative processes, there is a need for not only gender balance within and outside institutions, but for a gender balance of power at all levels. In addition, and most importantly, both museums and their boards or councils are subject to constraints from government bodies, particularly through funding and staffing levels.

However, having women in decision-making positions or positions of power within museums does not necessarily ensure women's interests are placed on the institutional agenda or, if so, that they are given a high priority. Professional, political, and financial concerns can, and usually do, take priority. At the same time, concepts of objectivity and neutrality and attempts to avoid gender discrimination can act to mask under-representation and the invisibility of women.

Numerous critics have noted the importance of feminist frameworks for informing museum policies and practices and the need for a transformation of social attitudes. As Linda Young has said: 'The devaluing of women is an expression of sexism in society, and our entire cultural environment will have to change before there is gender justice in museum operations and representations' (Young, 1990: 33). But waiting for this transformation should not deter museums from taking a more positive role in effecting social change. Robert Sullivan has argued that museums should become 'moral educators' in the areas of gender and race equity:

As educational institutions, we are necessarily agents of change, not only changing the knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings of our individual visitors but also affecting the moral ecology of the communities that we serve. The pattern of our decision-making in our governance policies, hiring practices, and collection and interpretation programs sends value-laden messages to our communities about what we consider to be worthwhile and just. (Sullivan, 1994: 100).

### POLICIES AND RESOURCES TO EFFECT CULTURAL CHANGE

There is a need for policy commitments by all museums to address gender issues in all their areas of activity and for such commitments to be written into policy documents and thence available for auditing and evaluation (Anderson, 1993: 22).

In this respect, the report of the Queensland Museum Policy Review recommended that the Queensland Museum provide an annual women's budget statement which would identify for every significant budget item its gender effects and assess whether it were neutral or biased towards one gender rather than another. For example, a display which attracts more women than men would have a female gender bias; an educational outreach program which serves disciplines in which more males are enrolled would have a male gender bias. Although this recommendation has not been put into effect, the Queensland Museum has taken an innovative approach in appointing an Advisory Committee on Women's Issues. It will be the responsibility of this committee to advise the Board on matters relevant to the collection, conservation and display of items reflecting the interests and achievements of women, particularly Queensland women.

### RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

To advance women's interests it is important to develop a broad approach that will provide access to knowledge for lay people and non-academics,



enabling them to produce knowledge about themselves. Contemporary cultural debates from the National Centre for Australian Studies and its Ideas for Australia program have focussed on 'unlocking the academics' and creating a freer flow of ideas in public intellectual life in Australia. From a series of forums and discussion papers the program has fostered wide public debate in the humanities, natural and social sciences, arts and museums, encouraging a diversity and difference of opinion to ensure Australia remains 'a prosperous, liberal democratic and lively society' (Resolution from the National Ideas Summit, Canberra, 1991). Importantly, the Ideas for Australia committee, and contributors to these forums, workshops and discussion papers represent some of our most noted commentators and critiques of 'conventional wisdoms'. What is surprising, and disappointing, is that the discussion paper, *Museums: An Argument with their own Society*, glosses over the issue of women and museums except for brief reference to the Pioneer Women's Hut.

It is critical that intellectual and cultural developments in these areas are not ignored by feminist strategists. There is a need to develop more extensive and close links between the research efforts in academia, independent research bodies, policy makers, collecting institutions and the public. The proposed Foundation for Australian Cultural Development may be a potential area for furthering the interests of women in museums. However, Commonwealth Government delays and prevarications mean this is still an unknown quantity.

Through these organisations and those directly involved with museums — Museums Australia and its associated organisations and interest groups, including the Women's Section — further strategies for developing more participatory programs might include:

- 1, Developing closer relationships between tertiary institutions, women's research areas and museums. Museums, with their collections of material culture and primary documentation, are well placed to initiate research projects with other institutions involved in women's studies. Specific ways this might be achieved could involve: establishing networking activities that cross academic and museum divides and incorporate women from the community; developing frameworks and guidance for women to conduct their own research, produce their own histories, and have input into exhibition projects; and setting up joint-venture projects with community groups to

research and collect in the area of women's culture/s;

- 2, 'Feminising' the tertiary curriculum. Although Women's Studies programs are now available on many campuses, there is an argument for all tertiary students to acquire a basic understanding of women's issues across disciplinary fields, including museum studies;

- 3, Inclusion of museology as a tertiary subject. The offering of a general museology unit in all tertiary institutions (particularly within women's studies courses) would not only encourage more tertiary students from diverse disciplines (from sciences to humanities) to take up museum careers, but would develop 'greater museum literacy in the community at large' (Galla, 1993); and

- 4, Research based displays. The output of academic research on women's issues provides fertile sources for museums displays and frameworks for collecting activities. Also required is more in-depth research of women's material culture such as Ann Delroy's examination of gas utility distribution in Perth from 1900 to 1950 and its relationship to class (Delroy, 1991-1992) and Kimberley Webber's discussion of the social construction of the sewing machine in Australian domestic history (Webber, 1991-1992).

#### COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Whilst acknowledging the importance of academic work to museums, there are other windows of opportunity. History and cultural knowledges are not the prerogative of academics. They reside in specific communities where it is frequently the women who are the 'culture bearers' and 'culture brokers'. Encouraging a more democratic participation of women in museums could be achieved by:

- 1, Bringing women into museums by increased networking with women's groups, community and ethnic groups with special focus on women's interests;

- 2, Initiating research projects that go out into the community and make links with individuals and groups through oral history programs, co-operative programs with outside bodies, collecting and borrowing objects on a loan basis from individuals, schools and social groups;

- 3, Presenting public programs that speak directly to women, and demonstrate the value of women's work (in the home, workplace) their public roles and their private contributions to society, community, family; and

4, Providing Access galleries. The Migration Museum's Forum (discussed in more detail in Chapter 5) has provided a model in this area and, since its opening in 1987, has hosted a number of exhibitions specifically addressing women's interests, i.e., *Ukrainian Embroidery in South Australia* (1988), Ukrainian Women's Association Inc.; *What Choice Have we Got? Migrant Women and Outwork* (1990), Working Women's Centre; *Greek Handicraft Traditions: The Personal Treasures of Adelaide's Greek Women* (1991), The Greek Women's Handicraft Co-operative; *Lace: The Labour and the Luxury* (1987); *Strictly Black* (1989); *Fair Game: The Cultural Connections of Sport in South Australia*; and *Chinese Embroidery* (1987).

#### THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENTS

For too long governments — Federal and State — have avoided the issue of museums and women even though they are starting to address women's issues in other areas. Some of the factors in this neglect have already been covered, but a further explanation lies in governments failing to recognise the economic contributions museums make to the economy. The Cultural Ministers Council's Statistical Advisory Group (SAG) has estimated that museums employed nearly 7,000 people during 1988 whilst the value of services within the museum and art museum sector (including zoological and marine parks and botanical gardens) amounted to \$260 million (SAG estimates). The same source estimated visits to museums during 1990/91 totalled approximately 9.7 million (Australian Commission for the Future, 1992: 81-82). These economic benefits of museums could be further enhanced according to a recent report, *A Framework for Improving Viability in Selected Sectors of the Cultural Industry* which identified new markets for Australian museums to exploit. In the export area, this report noted a growing Asian market for conservation and curatorial skills and services. On the domestic scene, Australian museums were urged to take advantage of the cultural tourism phenomenon by developing museum products geared to tourist markets such as specialised cultural tour products. Concurrent with, and partly as a result of these findings, cultural planning has now become an agenda item for all tiers of government (Australian Commission for the Future, 1992: 82-87).

Given this level of interest in cultural activities, government inquiries and reviews of their cultural 'flagships', and an increasing popular usage

of museums as well as an unprecedented academic and professional interest in museums, it is timely for governments to take some direct action and ensure women's interests are advanced in museums both in cultural and economic spheres.

As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) takes responsibility for aboriginal affairs, and the Office of Multicultural Affairs looks after and attempts to ensure the needs of multicultural communities are met, some more positive policies that address the issue of women and museums are called for from the Office for the Status of Women. Strategies need to be set in place to encourage better interface between the Office for the Status of Women, the Heritage branch of the Department of Communications and Arts and museums; and for their equivalents at State level to play an agenda-setting role in effecting new relationships between museums and women, both in respect to representational matters and equal employment opportunities. It is a question of accountability but accountability is a two-way process. Changes required of museums and systems of accountability to both government and communities is one way of ensuring the transformations required. But governments too are accountable to the community for providing adequate resources for public institutions. Museums need resource support from governments and government agencies. Therefore performance indicators that measure the rate of change can be linked to funding, and mutually agreed progressive development programs established to achieve specified goals.

#### GUIDE TO KEY SOURCES

ANDERSON, Margaret 1993. Engendering public culture: women and museums in Australia. This was the background paper for the 'Images of Women Conference', Canberra, 1993. It provides an overview of the history of museums in relation to women's interests and comments on various exhibitions that have explored women's culture.

BICKFORD, Anne 1987. Calthorpe's House Museum Guide. This guide to the historic Canberra house is based on an interpretation that takes up themes of domestic life and the home as a workplace.

CLARK, Julia 1992. 'Girls stuff?: gender in interpretation.' Clark contests the claim that women's business, or girls' stuff, is only of concern to women. She argues that museums are

involved in constructing gendered images that ignore the changing roles of men and women in real society and asserts the need for women to have equal access to the making of meaning.

GLASER, Jane R. & ZENETOU, Artemis A. (eds) 1994. 'Gender Perspectives: Essays on Women in Museums. Thirty five contributors reflect a cross section of female and male perspectives on feminist issues in museums by exploring museum scholarship, exhibitions, research and education programs. A strength of many of the articles is the application of feminist theory to museum practices. Also stimulating are those papers on women and the sciences — a topic not well covered in the literature to date. Contributions are divided into historical perspectives, impacts of feminist scholarship on the disciplines and across museum collections, exhibitions and publications. A further section covers feminist initiatives in ethnic museums, children's museums and science and technology centres. A section on gender perspectives on museums as educational institutions is followed with articles concerned with how museums, and women, will handle their futures.

HOWE, Renate (ed.), 1993. 'Women and the state: Australian perspectives'. Papers from a conference on 'Women and the State' and deals with women's roles in the modern state, the gendered nature of citizenship, the impact of specific ideologies about women, and their relationships to theories of state. Many of these debates provide the background against which questions about the relationship between museums and women may be raised and analysed.

LAKE, Marilyn 1991. *Historical homes*. Lake discusses historical house museums and argues that the process of registration has only served to preserve women's historical invisibility.

MAYNARD, Margaret 1992. *Terrace gowns and shearer's boots: Rethinking dress and the public collection*. Maynard argues that collecting strategies which prioritise minority fashions of the elite and categorise traditional women's attire as 'decorative' further entrench images of woman as ornamental and ineffectual. She advocates that museums re-evaluate what objects they select and display, and whose pasts they attempt to preserve.

MAYO, Edith 1983. *Women's history and public history: The museum connection*. Mayo reviews the history of women's history in the United States and charts the shifting pattern from promoting the preservation of historic houses (of prominent men) during the late nineteenth and

early twentieth century to increasing efforts, since the 1970s, to present more about the history of women in museums, historic sites and living museum interpretations.

MELOSH, Barbara 1989. *Speaking of women: museums' representations of women*. Melosh reviews a selection of exhibitions in the USA that explicitly focus on women's history.

MOGENSEN, Else 1988. *A living museum. The Women's Museum in Aarhus, Denmark*, is described.

MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA JOURNAL. Out of the Box. This special issue on women in museums covers: national museums and representations of Australian culture (Margaret Anderson), domestic work in museums (Lisa Dale, Ann Stephen, Kimberley Webber and Linda Young), Aboriginal women in museum representations (Heather Goodall), house museums (Elaine Lawson, Julia Clark, Paula Hamilton), ideology and museum practices (Julie Marcus), material culture and women's history (Anderson), etc. The volume also includes a useful bibliography on women and museums.

MUSEUM, 'Focus on Women'. This special issue was an outcome of the United Nations International Decade for Women (1975-85). Various articles provide a global view of the position of women in museums. Contributors were asked to comment on what images of women are reflected in museum exhibitions, how women are fairing in museum professions, how their prospects may be improved in the professions and how museums can improve the status of women. Countries covered include Australia, Britain, Germany, Japan, USA, Ecuador, Malaysia, Denmark, Nigeria, USSR, India, Mexico, Portugal, Botswana and the Caribbean.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA, 1994. *Images of Women*. Conference papers from a forum to examine current representation of women's issues in museum collections and exhibitions to encourage community participation in discussing these issues and to canvass national guidelines for collection and exhibition programs in the area of women's history. Contains keynote addresses from Robyn Archer (museums and giving people their own history), Jackie Huggins (Aboriginal women), The Hon. Michael Lavarch (national context for conference), Jocelynn Scutt, (professional women and work) Marilyn Opperman (culture and ethnic communities); opening and closing speeches from the Hon. Rosemary Crowley and Cathy Freeman; con-

ference discussion paper from Margaret Anderson and list of conference recommendations.

PORTER, Gaby 1988. Putting your house in order: representations of domestic life. Both this and the following article focus on how museum practices produce particular styles, and techniques of representation that are biased against women. The article discusses ways in which material culture and curatorial practices converge to make women invisible.

PORTER, Gaby 1990. Gender bias: representations of work in history museums. Porter discusses how social and economic positions of women interact with museum practices on material culture.

PORTER, Gaby 1991b. Partial truths. Porter discusses post-structuralist and psychoanalytical theories in relation to the construction of categories of femininity and masculinity within museums and argues the need for a theoretical approach to overcome patriarchal traditions in museum practices.

SAWER, Marian 1992. The guide seeks to overcome the lack of a national women's archive by identifying the location of material about women in politics in Australia from among the scattering of Commonwealth, State and university archives, various small women's archives and in the Faucet Library, London. Exhibitions, guides to collections, to women's organisations, indices, pictorial collections, monuments, oral histories, and film and video and guides to collections and women's organisations are detailed. In addition, sources of holdings are listed on a State by State basis.

SCHLERETH, Thomas 1989. Material culture research and North American Social History. This article includes discussion of women's history and draws on the work of Ruth Cowan (1979), and K.W. Carrell (1979) to suggest material culture studies should turn their attention to 'housewifery' and explore issues of women's role in the production and processing industries, servant management and social control, and the design, manufacture and social role of clothing, as well as exploring experiences of childbearing and child nurturing.

WEBBER, Kimberley 1987. Constructing Australia's past: The development of historical collections 1888-1938. Although this paper does not specifically refer to representation of women, Webber's account of the relationship between museums and national identity describes the importance of explorers, great men, bushmen and the ANZAC's in representations of Australia's

past in historical displays and in so doing illustrates the masculinist values which have prevailed in both museum work and construction of national identity.

## APPENDIX 1

### NEW YORK STATE MUSEUM GENDER EQUITY COMMITTEE

CRITERIA FOR GENDER EQUITY IN EXHIBITS, PROGRAMS AND PUBLICATIONS  
(Quoted in Sullivan: 1994, 100-107)

#### *Invisibility.*

1. Are equally meaningful roles given to both men and women? What effort has been made to represent men and women as having equal status: professional, social, economic, etc?
2. Do the visible credits on the exhibit, film, or program reflect the broad range of individuals who contributed to the product?
3. Are men and women both equally represented by the artefacts? By people? By voice?
4. Are quotes and anecdotes from women in history and from important living women used as frequently as those from men?
5. If men and women have different roles, are these separate roles shown as being equally important to the overall development of culture?
6. Have opportunities been missed to present sex-fair images?

#### *Stereotyping.*

1. When people are presented visually in roles, is an effort made to avoid stereotyping their behaviours and aspirations? For example, are women always presented as nurturers and men as builders or persons involved in technology?
2. Are opportunities taken to give examples of both men and women in significant roles that do not contradict historical fact?
3. Unless there is a specific reason for not doing so (ie historical example), are both sexes portrayed from similar attitudinal perspectives (eg humour, satire, respect, etc)?
4. Is an effort made to avoid using only pastel colours and fuzzy line definition to illustrate females and only strong colours and bold lines to portray males?
5. Do graphs and charts use other than stereotypical stick figures?
6. Do the materials indicate mutual respect among the characters through their posture, clothing, and gesture?

7. Are physical and emotional stereotypes avoided? Is an effort made to avoid showing men only as vigorous and powerful and women only as delicate and fragile?

8. Do illustrations include other than young, attractive, and preferred body types?

#### *Imbalance/Selectivity.*

1. Do artefacts reflect varieties of populations and subcultures whenever possible?

2. If artefactual evidence is not available, how are unrepresented populations accounted for?

3. How is the planning staff of the exhibit, program, or film balanced for gender and other constituent group representation to provide a variety of experiences and perspectives?

4. Are experts such as sociologists brought in at appropriate times so that the full spectrum of peoples contributing to our society's evolution is reflected in all aspects of the museum?

5. Does the material presented reflect other value systems besides that of the majority white male culture?

6. If historical bias exists, how does the exhibit, film, or program, acknowledge this limitation? (e.g., in the past women couldn't attach their names to literature, music, inventions etc).

#### *Unreality.*

1. What effort is made to discuss, to exhibit, and/or to encourage programs on controversial topics such as discrimination and prejudice?

2. When a historically biased situation is cited or represented, how is it qualified as past values that are no longer acceptable?

#### *Fragmentation.*

1. Have certain issues that are gender-related been separated from the main body of materials, implying that these issues are less important?

#### *Linguistic bias.*

1. Is the generic 'she' used where the antecedent is stereotypically female (e.g. 'the housekeeper ... she')?

2. Is the generic 'he' used to include both males and females when gender is unspecified?

3. Does the material use sex-fair language initially and then slip into the use of the generic 'he' (e.g., 'A worker can have union dues deducted from his pay.')?

4. Are women identified by their own names rather than their husband's names (e.g. Madame Pierre Curie, Mrs F.D. Roosevelt)?

5. Are non parallel terms used in referring to males and females (e.g. Dr Jones and his secretary, Ellen; Senator Kennedy and Mrs Ghandi)?

6. When referring to both sexes, does the male term consistently precede the female (e.g. he and she, boys and girls)?

7. Are occupational titles used with -man as the suffix (e.g. chairman, businessman)?

8. When an individual holds a non traditional job, is there unnecessary focus on the person's sex (e.g. the women doctor, the male nurse)?

9. Are women described in terms of their appearance or marital and familial status, while men are described in terms of accomplishments or titles (e.g. Senator Kennedy and Golda Meir, mother of two)?

10. Is the text consistent with the illustrations in terms of sex fairness?

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## CHAPTER 3

### FROM MONOCULTURE TO MULTICULTURE: THE RESPONSE OF AUSTRALIAN MUSEUMS TO MULTICULTURALISM

ROBIN TROTTER

#### INTRODUCTION

Although some countries have recognised cultural differences within their borders — Canada with its bilingual cultural policy and New Zealand with a bicultural policy based on the Treaty of Waitangi — Australia is one of the few countries to adopt a policy of multiculturalism to reflect the ethnic and cultural diversity of its population. This diversity is evident in an analysis of the population mix. Currently, about one in four of the population is of mixed Anglo-Celtic or non-Anglo-Celtic descent. Extensive inter-marrying has resulted in 10% of third and later-generation Australians having a single ethnic origin; about 30% having two origins; 40% with three or four; and 20% having five or more (Alomes & Jones, 1991: 418).

Abandonment of the White Australia policy in 1973 signalled a shift from the long-maintained policies of exclusion to multiculturalism. This, and earlier changes to government policy and immigration programs, have been tied to the historical processes of migration, the needs of a national economy, and socio-political pressures. In the 30 year period following World War II Australia experienced a period of mass migration which was driven by rapid expansion and structural changes in the economy. It was promoted through a government program of large-scale labour immigration under an assistance scheme. Although the government had promised that all assisted migrants would be Caucasian and most of British origin, a downturn in people wishing to migrate from those countries meant the scheme had to turn to other sources. Increasingly migrants were sought from Southern Europe then the Middle East and finally Asian countries. New-comers were expected to adopt the language, customs and beliefs of mainstream Australians and to merge into the community. By the early 1970s a more conservative approach to immigration was being adopted. Initially moderate reductions were placed on immigrant targets and in the mid 1970s targets were dramatically pruned. These policy changes were the result of changing origins of migrant flows, population pressure,

economic inflation, unemployment and public attitudes and criticism of assimilationist policy.

As a precursor to multicultural policy, Jerzy Zubrzycki argued in 1968 for cultural diversity through the maintenance of migrant languages. In 1973 Al Grasby presented a paper, *A Multicultural Society for the Future*, in which he argued against assimilation and for retaining, and respecting, the cultures and customs of migrants. The Fraser government continued the momentum initiated by the Whitlam government with the establishment of an advisory body on multiculturalism — the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council. In 1977 it published *Australia as a Multicultural Society* which finally gave official recognition to multiculturalism. The following year, the Galbally Report on migrant welfare services appeared. This stressed the importance of maintaining ethnic cultures and confirmed a commitment to multiculturalism. In 1980, the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs was set up to develop public understanding of diverse cultures within Australia. Successive governments have affirmed this commitment to multiculturalism. Numerous landmark reports in the late 1980s and early 1990s demonstrated stronger government interest in promoting multiculturalism. These included a report on Folklife in Australia (1987), proceedings from a conference of museums, libraries, archives and historical collecting bodies on multiculturalism (1989), a report from the Office of Multicultural Affairs urging protection of cultural property of all Australians (1989), guidelines to encourage collecting institutions to become more reflective of cultural diversity (1991) and, in 1993, report from the Office of Multicultural Affairs promoting multicultural training in cultural institutions.

As government policies have changed as to who could and should be Australian citizens, so has the government's concept of Australian culture changed from mono-culturalist to multiculturalist. The concept of citizenship has also broadened from enfranchisement to incorporate social justice and cultural rights. As a result, museums and other collecting institutions are now being asked to represent this plurality. The extent of the response may mean the difference

between tokenism and creating a more empowering and culturally diverse environment.

These changes in government policy have implications for museum policies and practices. Under a multicultural model, the national culture includes multiple threads that enter at different periods and stretch back to different origins that may be, culturally complex. The following quotations illustrate the complexity of multiculturalism which museums need to address.

First, the *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* defines the term from a political perspective:

The Commonwealth Government has identified three dimensions of multicultural policy:

- cultural identity: the right of all Australians within carefully defined limits to express and share their individual cultural heritage including their language and religion;
- social justice: the right of all Australians to equality of treatment and opportunity, and the removal of barriers of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, gender or place of birth; and
- economic efficiency: the need to maintain develop and utilise effectively the skills and talents of all Australians, regardless of background.

The *Agenda* also notes certain limits to Australian multiculturalism:

- multicultural policies are based on the premise that all Australians should have an overriding and unifying commitment to Australia, to its interests and future first and foremost;
- multicultural policies require all Australians to accept the basic structures and principles of Australian society — the Constitution and the rule of law, tolerance and equality, parliamentary democracy, freedom of speech and religion, English as the national language and equality of the sexes; and
- multicultural policies impose obligations as well as conferring rights: the right to express one's own culture and beliefs involves a reciprocal responsibility to accept the right of others to express their views and values. (Office of Multicultural Affairs, 1989).

The definition adopted by the Federation of Ethnic Councils of Australia (FECCA) is more visionary in tone:

The Federation defines a multicultural society as one in which a variety of different cultural groups co-exist harmoniously, free to maintain their distinctive religions, linguistic or social customs, equal as individuals in their access to resources and services appropriate to them and their needs, to civil and political rights, and sharing with the rest of society particular concerns and values. There would be diversity, equality and empathy of interaction. All of the groups would stress tolerance of cultural, linguistic and religious differences which would be complementary to the loyalties the individual shares with other Australians and

which forms his/her identity as an Australian in the Australian ethos. (Gardini & Skardoon, 1985).

A more theoretically informed definition of a multicultural society is proposed by Ivan Karp:

Every society can be seen as a constantly changing mosaic of multiple communities and organisations. Individual identities and experiences never derive entirely from single segments of society — from merely one of the communities out of which the complex and changing social order is made. An individual can in the space of a short time move from emphasising the part of his or her identity that comes from membership in an ethnic community to highlighting his or her participation in a formal organisation such as a professional society and then back to being an ethnic-community member again. We experience these identities not as all-encompassing entities but through specific social events: encounters and social settings where identities are made relevant by the people participating in them. Communities are often thought of as things and given thinglike names such as "the Irish", "the blacks", "the Jews", "the WASPs". But they are actually experienced as encounters in which cultures, identities, and skills are acquired and used. These settings can involve communal groups as small and intimate as the nuclear family or as large and institutional as the convention of a professional society. People form their primary attachments and learn to be members of society in these settings, which can be referred to collectively as the institutions of civil society. (Karp, 1992: 3-4).

## MUSEUM REPRESENTATIONS OF ETHNICITY

The Pigott report, in arguing for a Museum of Australia to depict the history of man and nature in Australia, noted that a major pavilion devoted to the history of Europeans in Australia was warranted on the grounds that State museums had not been able to satisfy a quickening public interest in our recent history and that 'so far no museum in Australia has attempted, even on a moderate scale, to depict the history of Australia since the coming of the British' (Commonwealth of Australia, 1975: 12.9). Museums have, until recent years, paid scant attention to Australian history, so there is limited representation in museums of ethnic peoples and their cultures. Further, their inclusion in museum exhibitions has been hindered by policies and practices that make a migrant presence invisible, or project stereotyped images of migrants in Australia.

## INVISIBILITY OF ETHNIC PEOPLE IN MUSEUMS

In the last decade, with broader community debate about multiculturalism, museums have started to recognise the historical neglect of ethnic populations, and various ways of addressing this issue are now being put into place in some museums. This under representation of ethnic

culture from our museums can be seen as a consequence of a number of factors.

*Cultural Dominance of Anglo-Celtic People.* One outcome of a dominant Anglo-Celtic population and culture was the marginalisation of ethnicity and of migrant experiences. This is particularly evident in museums. As these institutions slowly built up their history collections, Anglocentric perspectives were carried over, partly due to the prevailing concerns of historians who tended to focus on themes of politics, labour movements and industrial development and partly due to assumptions in the wider community that Australia was, and has remained, 'British'.

Even within the local museum movement which accelerated from the late 1960s, boomed in the 1970s and reached a frenetic pitch by 1988, the focus has largely been on depicting the history of Anglo-Celtic Australians. These museums have tended to ignore or gloss over evidence of ethnic origins or input of other cultural values into the social environment. Gail Griffith suggested this is a result of local historical work being: a) divorced from academic work, b) linked to a chauvinistic form of Australian nationalism that was formulated within a framework of British Imperial allegiances, c) highly selective, and d) having a tendency to rely on sources that are themselves biased (Griffith, 1989: 104-109).

*Assimilationist Philosophies.* Government policies and public attitudes encouraged migrants to blend into the mainstream of Australian society or pushed them into isolated communities. As A.G. Beazly, a cabinet member in the Chifley government, put it:

Australia will seek migrants of our own kind who could be readily assimilated and who believe in the standards of living we have struggled to achieve. (Castles et al., 1988: 49) [emphasis added].

Migrants were expected to become 'substantially Australian in the first generation and completely Australian in the second generation' (Billy Snedden, quoted in Castles et al., 1988: 52). It was assumed this was achievable by immigrants acquiring English language skills and being dispersed throughout, and intermingling with, the host society. In accordance with these conceptions, museums were thought of as places where migrants might learn Australian values rather than as places where they might find their own values reflected or a dialogue of different values.

*Hidden Histories.* The reasons why people decide to immigrate are many and varied ranging from personal to national events. Personal decisions may be lost over generations as people

often wish to bury negative aspects of the migrant experience — failure in the 'home' country, traumas of poverty and loneliness, or ordeals of racism, discrimination, or even conflict in the 'host' country. Amplifying this tendency to a 'hidden' past for migrant people is the fact that events overseas have been given little space within Australian history.

Even our military and maritime museums, where one might expect to find evidence of overseas connections, have tended to remain silent on such topics. The Australian War Memorial, although its major displays are dedicated to battle theatres overseas, remains Australian-centred with its commitment to recording the experiences of Australian service men and women serving, fighting, and dying, in the nation's wars. A modification to the War Memorial's initial brief has extended this to include the causes and aftermath of war so, in principle, the legislation allows for the Museum to present displays that embrace the social and political history of the wars in which Australians have been involved. However, changes in displays to incorporate these themes have been slow to appear. Similarly, our maritime museums have focused their attentions on Australia by exhibiting ships and artefacts associated with the history of commercial shipping and shipbuilding, dealing with naval matters, and, in recent years, developing displays devoted to maritime archaeology. The National Maritime Museum, takes an approach to maritime history which includes people who live and work around the sea and who travel across it. It opens the way for a more expansive interpretation of maritime museums; one that might incorporate social aspects of maritime life and migration.

*A Deficit of History.* Until recently there has been a paucity of research into the demographic and social history of immigrants. This is especially so for those involved in mass migration, chain migration or refugee entry. For example, when planning an exhibition on Greek-Australians, Leonard Janiszkeski and Effy Alexakis noted, when they came to collect material, that much of what had been gathered to date related either to the upper strata of immigrant groups and to prominent organisations, or was restricted to limited topics and periods. In effect:

No collection that we investigated provided a substantial volume of material which ably cut across most social levels of the Greek community in Australia, or was in possession of a considerable degree of historical depth, particularly before 1900. (Janiszkeski & Alexakis, 1989: 31)



Another national group which has had considerable impact on Australian life — its economy, its landscape, and its social relations — has been the Chinese. The Chinese gold miners, market gardeners, apothecaries, rural workers etc. who cleared the land, worked the goldfields and who have contributed to the creation of wealth, and health, have received scant historical recognition and even less representation in museums outside Chinese community collections.

#### STEREOTYPICAL IMAGES

*Ethnicity.* Where elements of an ethnic past are included in displays and exhibitions there is a strong tendency to stereotypical images. Again Janiszski & Alexakis comment on this tendency in relation to Greek-Australians: '... an urban stereotype of the Greek fish-and-chip shop owner or cafe proprietor, or the folkloric stereotype of Greek festivals and dancers in traditional costume, predominates' (Janiszski & Alexakis, 1989). Stereotypical images such as these tend to be constructed around traditional 'folk' images or a concentration on ethnic 'types' and popular associations of particular groups with certain occupations. This focus on the 'folk' elements of ethnic cultures can evoke sentimentality and nostalgia rather than encourage understanding or provide information. Without denigrating traditional cultural rituals and festivals, a more comprehensive picture would include these as part of a total migrant experience — as part of everyday life, as ways in which traditions have been kept alive as well as ways in which old practices have been modified: such a picture might reveal what has been lost, what retained and why.

Typical representations that associate particular ethnic groups with certain activities and occupations is another form of stereotyping. Greek people are traditionally associated with cafe life, the Chinese with laundry work. Researching different lives, or even looking at reasons for concentrations of particular migrant groups within specific occupations would not only enable a better appreciation of the migrant experience but could also reveal more about Australians and the Australian 'way of life'. That museums have continued to represent ethnic peoples in these traditional ways is described by Amareswar Galla, as the perpetuation of a 'colonial sociology'. It is, he argues, a 'tyranny of stereotypes', which may be defined in terms of dichotomies or binary oppositions. As Galla puts it:

These are presented in terms of us and them; black and white; Anglo and 'ethnic'; primitive and civilised,

literate and illiterate; oriental and occidental; and more recently Asian and European (Galla, 1993: 2).

*Ignoring Diversity.* Ethnic stereotyping is often a result of a failure to recognise difference (linguistic, regional, generational, religious etc) within ethnic groups. One of the most disparate, but also one of the most unified ethnic groups in Australia is the Jewish community whose members have been arriving in Australia since 1788 from all around the world and represent a mixture of linguistic groups and socio-economic strata. Descendants of German Lutherans who came to South Australia in the 1830s to escape religious persecution and '... found settlements wherein they could realise the ancient peasant virtues of industry and thrift' (Price, 1957, quoted in Zubrzycki, 1992) would have little in common with more recent German migrants — in particular, post-war assisted German migrants coming from wartorn urban backgrounds looking for refuge, work and wealth in industrialised centres.

#### COLLECTING AND OTHER MUSEUM PRACTICES

These constraints that inhibit museums from providing adequate representations of non Anglo-Celtic citizens mean that museums have not collected widely in the area. At the same time, there are problems in the area of collecting that have their own impact on the extent and type of ethnic material culture which museums display. Locating appropriate material culture, then identifying and documenting the associated history is often difficult for museums. Further, collecting criteria, the conflicting agendas of museums and ethnic communities, as well as social and cultural differences, can challenge museums to meet a multicultural agenda.

*Collections.* Existing holdings are often biased to Anglo-Celtic culture and limited in respect to material on migration due to

- 1, The bulk of collections having been built up in the nineteenth century;

- 2, A late start to multicultural collecting with only a limited number of museums now establishing collection policies in this area;

- 3, Scarcity of material available in this area due to the migration process itself (refugees mostly arrive with no possessions, others often can only bring the bare essentials), as well as distrust of museums by ethnic peoples. As Viv Szekeres, Director of the Migration Museum in South Australia relates, it has taken time and effort to nurture the trust of ethnic communities to such an extent that individuals are willing to donate, or lend, objects (Szekeres, 1989: 74);

4, Undervaluing the multicultural past by both host and immigrant cultures for various reasons. Assimilationist philosophies, the trauma of leaving home, and a concentration on future and self-improvement which sees artefacts representative of 'old' ways being discarded as families became upwardly mobile and wish to conform, fit in, or blend into the wider society, can all contribute to devaluing ethnic pasts; and

5, Poor documenting of much ethnic material culture.

*Forms of Address.* Museum displays, public programs and outreach activities are most frequently directed to English speakers. Display texts are almost always in English. Further, museum practices that follow traditional labelling styles which either omit or are slim on social and historical contextualisation can delimit ethnicity. Anthropological sections overtly address non-indigenous audiences and present these cultures from a Eurocentric academic perspective. As a Samoan speaker told a Review panel for the Queensland Museum,

... there is some history of the Pacific Islands in the Queensland Museum but we (the Samoan community of Brisbane) would like to be recognised and become involved (Queensland Museum Policy Review, 1993, Public submission).

*Conflicting Agendas.* Conflict may emerge between the objectives of museums and those of ethnic communities. Ethnic organisations are mostly concerned with representing their histories in positive, non-conflictive and celebratory terms. Museums, by contrast, might be concerned with raising questions about the past, airing controversial issues, and exploring conflictive relationships such as racism, discrimination and alienation. As the governing body of the Italian Historical Society expresses it, the organisation has 'sought to be a place of consensus where political divisiveness was discouraged' but one which would 'always reflect a full cross-section of views in the Italian community' (Co-As-It Italian Assistance Association Annual Report, 1993). In contrast, Szekeres has noted that displays at the Migration Museum, in focusing on the experiences of migrants,

... are therefore critical of government policy in which immigration schemes have been biased towards British English-speaking migrants and government policy has been openly racist' (Szekeres, 1989: 74).

Margaret Anderson, too, has pointed out that it is 'easy' to portray the 'contribution' of different cultures to Australian life but much more difficult to

delve deeper into the less positive aspects of immigration history ... to present any sort of balanced picture (Anderson, 1987: 109).

Differing agendas have also been long established within Australian museums in respect to their holdings of material culture of non-English speaking societies. Much of this has been collected, displayed and interpreted as examples of other cultures and not as part of Australian history and culture. Consequently the emphasis has been on aesthetic or functional qualities, not on the social meanings of such objects.

At another level, as the Bicentennial Historic Records Search revealed, much of the material culture of Australians of non-English speaking backgrounds is privately held — in homes or community collections. The significance of this material may lie in familial or community values and the individual objects may be regarded as everyday items of common usage, as treasured family heirlooms, or as symbols of a different cultural background. Dr Judith Winternitz, who carried out a survey of this 'hidden heritage', raises a number of ethical questions about the role of major Australian heritage institutions — questions to which she does not provide answers but which reveal the sensitive nature of collecting in the realm of the personal, the social, and the cultural:

To what extent should major Australian heritage institutions such as State museums and galleries be encouraged to go out and actively solicit or collect such 'hidden heritage' items? How should they go about this ethically? Is it possible to combine formal methods of correct documentation and display in institutions with a sensitivity toward the community's or individual's connection to and interpretation of items? Does accessibility to the general public and the educative value of a broader presentation of Australian heritage in formal collections make up for the remoteness imposed on objects once they are removed from every day life and placed in a museum context? (Winternitz, 1990: xi-xiii).

*Social Barriers.* Many migrants (especially first generation) are identified as working-class with inherent collection problems associated with this class. Working-class material culture such as clothing, furniture and tools, are often 'worked' to death and accorded lowly status compared to prestigious artefacts lovingly preserved in more affluent homes. Further, with the tendency for 'cultural carers' to be women, 'ethnic' culture (material and non-material) can become associated with the women's sphere and as a consequence be subjected to the traditional museum treatment of women's matters. Even generational differences within communities may provoke opposing views on the migration experience. Many

oral historians note that older people are reluctant to talk about unhappy pasts or discuss experiences of racism or conflict. But for others, the process can be cathartic, even empowering.

*Cultural Barriers.* Religious sanctions, socio-religious taboos on rituals, life-cycle events and fear of political pressure on kith and kin at home, even inter-racial conflict, can discourage immigrants from discussing their experiences and consequently thwart museum collecting programs or research projects. As Szekeres recounts, one community was prohibited by its leaders from exhibiting in the Migration Museum because the Museum held artefacts from a country with which the community had a long-standing dispute (Szekeres, 1992: 21).

Concern about whether museums will respect particular cultural and religious views presents a further barrier to museum activities in this area. Viv Szekeres has written about a gift of a Chinese effigy of the Goddess of Mercy which was offered to the Migration Museum. But, according to tradition, this very beautiful work should be ceremonially burnt in order to 'arrest delinquent ghosts'. In this situation, the Museum, in consultation with the South Australian Chinese community, accepted the gift, displayed it for a period and then, at the appropriate date, re-enacted the ritual burning in accord with Chinese custom, even though such an action was in contradiction of the Western traditional museum mandate to preserve cultural objects (Szekeres, 1989: 76).

#### EMPLOYMENT

Given the statistics of ethnic influences in the population, employment data on museums suggest bias toward Anglo-Celtic staff in these institutions. This is confirmed by comments in *A Plan for Cultural Heritage Institutions to Reflect Australia's Cultural Diversity* (DASETT, 1991), which notes that Australia's collecting institutions have tended to be staffed primarily by immigrants from Britain and Ireland and their descendants. The result is a bias in both museum collections and activities that is unrepresentative of Australia's cultural diversity. The Plan calls for collecting institutions to consider recruitment of employees and volunteers with linguistic and/or cross-cultural awareness skills, and recruitment of volunteer guides drawn from a 'wide range of community groups' (DASETT, 1991: 18).

The agencies which determine cultural support [in Australia] are largely controlled by the Anglo-Australian majority, many of whom accept notions of Australian identity which exclude the minorities. (Jupp, 1991:13)

Galla argued that multicultural issues in museums should be addressed through internal policies. Affirmative action in human resource development programs that cover all institutional operations is required — not merely the token appointment of 'a few designated staff'. He suggests that a multicultural agenda should be an integral part of the mission statement of collecting institutions (Galla, 1993: 17-33).

*Lack of Data.* As with women, there has been a paucity of published data in respect to employment and this is only now being addressed through EEO legislation and reporting procedures. However, an added problem is the question of reporting. Self-reporting oneself as 'ethnic' in a work environment may be seen as unnecessary or even disadvantageous. Self-reporting of 'ethnicity' for EEO requirements is on a voluntary basis and, as the Director of one museum indicated, there were some among his staff who did not wish to be identified with the EEO target group of non-English speaking background.

In 1992-1993 only the Australian Museum, the Powerhouse Museum, and the Australian War Memorial provided details of employees of non-English speaking background (NESB) in their EEO reports. The Australian Museum employed 36 NESB people in a total staff of 278 (12.9%), with 16 of these in the two lowest categories (Clerical Officers Grade 1 and below), 4 employed as Administrative and Clerical staff Grades 1-2 and 12 in Grades 3-5. At the Powerhouse the corresponding figures were 77 NESB staff out of a total of 389 (19.8%), with 10 found at below Clerical Officer Grade 1, 38 at Grades 1-3, and 36 classified at Administrative and Clerical Grades 1-2. At the Australian War Memorial, NESB staff comprise 7.9% of the 205 staff.

*Career Development.* Career opportunities and decision-making opportunities for people of non-English speaking background are often limited in museum administration due to: 1) white, Anglo-Celtic males dominating executive officer levels; and/or, 2) political/bureaucratic systems rejecting overseas qualifications and experiences.

As figures from the Australia Council indicate, there are only 640 curators, researchers and registrars in professionally managed museums. Most are located in large urban centres and they form part of an elite professional group.

They are all late twentieth century Australians, mostly Anglo-Celtic in origins, almost without exception tertiary educated in a similar cultural milieu, overwhelmingly urban and their age range spans no more than about 25 years (Jones, 1992: 25).

## NEW DIRECTIONS

With cultural pluralism now on the agendas of governments, museums are beginning to address the question of multiculturalism and the representation of cultural diversity. This new direction is a product of government policies, a more reflective approach from museum administrators, and new practices in response to on-going pressure from community groups.

### GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

Specific strategies for collecting institutions have been developed as a consequence of various initiatives. Some of these key initiatives have been:

*1987. Release of 'Folklife: Our Living Heritage'.* This report covered the findings of the Committee of Inquiry into Folklife in Australia which was set up in 1986 to review ways of ensuring that traditions of Australia's rich, multicultural society were identified, documented and their survival within communities promoted as part of Australia's evolving cultural heritage. The Report recommended a Folklife Centre, Grants Scheme, a National Collection program, Folk Arts Committee and a program of Folk Arts Grants. To date the government has not acted on this report, although independent action has seen a Trust established.

*1989. 'New Responsibilities: Documenting Multicultural Australia'.* In 1988 a conference was convened by the Victorian Branch of the Museums Association of Australia for Museums, Libraries, Archives and Historical Collections to discuss multiculturalism. A set of recommendations was addressed to Commonwealth, State and local government covering funding, research, cultural collecting institutions, and training.

*1989. 'National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia: Sharing our Future'.* This report from the Office of Multicultural Affairs recognised a need to protect the cultural heritage of different ethnic groups. It defined multiculturalism as a policy for managing the consequences of cultural diversity in the interests of the individual and of society as a whole, and identified its dimensions in terms of cultural identity, social justice and economic efficiency whilst also noting the limitations to multiculturalism. The report encouraged libraries, museums and similar bodies to develop their collections to reflect Australia's diversity.

*1991. 'A Plan for Cultural Heritage Institutions to Reflect Australia's Cultural Diversity'*

*(DASETT).* An initiative of the 1988 conference and the 1989 National Agenda was formulation of a plan to encourage museums and libraries to reflect, in collections and practices, the cultural diversity of the Australian people. Specific measures advocated included: 1) Collection of material to reflect the heritage of all Australians; 2) Access to heritage material so that the cultural traditions of all Australians are maintained and shared and become part of Australian life; 3) Representation on management bodies; 4) Collection and display of materials in a 'Language Other than English' (LOTE); and 5) Consultation between community groups and collecting institutions.

These objectives were to be implemented by the Cultural Ministers Council which was to play a co-ordinating role and provide a policy and funding framework that would encourage collecting institutions to reflect cultural diversity. Changing attitudes and perceptions of libraries, art museums and museums was seen as fundamental to the objectives of the plan and, to this end they were urged to analyse the cultural and linguistic compositions of their catchment areas in order to develop appropriate collections and programs, and to also re-assess existing collections and programs to determine relevance to their particular community, so as to identify gaps and deficiencies.

*1993. 'Training as Access: Guidelines for the Development of Heritage Curricula and Cultural Diversity'.* This report prepared by Dr Galla and published by the Office of Multicultural Affairs, proposed guidelines for cross-cultural heritage education and training for the museum sector. Among its recommendations the Report proposed an Academy to promote cultural pluralism in institutions managing cultural heritage; the development by tertiary institutions of academic units incorporating policies and practices in indigenous and multicultural Australia, as well as courses in general museology

to provide an opportunity for all students to enhance their general museum consciousness irrespective of cultural or disciplinary backgrounds

and that a national framework be developed to enable heritage institutions to implement the *Plan for Cultural Heritage Institutions*.

### INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES

Strategies within museums to incorporate a multicultural agenda revolve largely around providing access to wider audiences, acknow-

ledging cultural diversity in exhibitions, and, to a lesser extent, looking at human resource management in order to establish employment policies that will encourage greater cultural diversity.

*Mission Statements.* Although museum mission statements are often dismissed as 'motherhood statements' that are too generalised to be of value, they do encapsulate the philosophical basis of the organisation. Consequently we find that some museum mission statements and/or corporate goals now contain a commitment to reflecting cultural diversity.

The National Museum's Annual Report of 1975 stated: 'The museum should portray, when appropriate, European and Asian and American influences on Australia's human and natural history', whilst the Report of the Museum's Interim Council for 1982 (pp. 5, 40) expanded on this philosophy:

The Museum will reflect the development of the Australian nation in all its cultural diversity

and more specifically:

The Museum will emphasise that Australian society today comprises people of many different origins. Apart from Aboriginal Australians, the present population of Australia (over 98%) are immigrants or the descendants of immigrants who have arrived in the past 200 years ... In treating the history of the past two hundred years, the Museum will pay special attention to events in the peopling of Australia. It will create an understanding of why different peoples came to Australia, what values and institutions they brought, and how they responded to the challenges brought about by the physical environment and the people already settled here including, above all, Aboriginal Australians. The Museum will highlight the effects of cultural diversity ... The Museum will show how the concept of assimilation of new immigrants is being re-examined and re-shaped by pluralistic philosophies and practices which recognise the worth of cultural diversity, encourage respect for persons whose background and values are different and reinforce in those persons a sense of self and of personal worth. (National Museum of Australia Annual Report, 1975).

One of the corporate goals of the Museum of Victoria is to 'reflect in the Museum's collections, exhibitions, programs and services, the contributions, the needs, and aspirations of Victoria's culturally diverse society', whilst the Migration Museum Policy Paper on Multiculturalism states:

The Migration Museum is firmly committed to the promotion of South Australia's multicultural heritage and to the public recognition of the social, political, cultural and historical value of different racial, ethnic, linguistic and religious groups and traditions. Heritage therefore plays an important educational role.

The Museum is also committed to the provision of equal access to the Museum and its programs by all ethnic and cultural groups. This implies equal opportunity for participation in exhibition programs as well as access as a visitor to a cultural institution, and high-

lights a corresponding obligation to address barriers to the delivery of its services to all ethnic groups.

These objectives can only be realised through participation and feedback from the community. The Museum actively encourages public debate about its exhibitions and its provision of service to stimulate discussion about and reinterpretation of multiculturalism.' (Migration Museum Policy document, 1991).

One of the strategic objectives of the Australian Museum's Corporate Strategy (1990-92) is 'to increase awareness of multicultural issues among staff. To increase the representation of people from different cultural backgrounds within the museum'. An action plan to implement this includes in-house training, identification of positions that require cross-cultural backgrounds or skills, encouraging volunteer recruitment of people from different cultural backgrounds, appointing people of non-English speaking background to selection committees and, in 1992, the appointment of a Cultural Diversity Co-ordinator.

In respect to the Australian Museum's Public Programs, the Corporate Strategy also refers to the need to 'attract a diversity of people from different cultural backgrounds to the Museum. To give Museum visitors a greater appreciation of our multicultural communities'. This will be achieved by extending promotional efforts to include the multicultural press and encouraging community groups to participate in cultural exhibitions. More specific actions proposed include: 1) developing market specific tours for language groups and tour operator packages; 2) incorporating ethnic music, arts, crafts, drama etc into weekend and holiday programs; 3) providing guides from different cultural backgrounds to interpret exhibitions and activities; 4) mounting exhibitions that reflect other cultures and encouraging appropriate groups to participate in planning, interpretation and public presentations; 5) reviewing the signage and texts in the Museum to improve access for diverse audiences; and 6) development of a semi-permanent exhibition to reflect cultural diversity in Australia.

#### MUSEUM PRACTICES

As museums increasingly recognise multiculturalism and incorporate an ethnic dimension into policy, changing practices in support of these policies are being introduced that direct museums into new roles, and substantially change their exhibition and collection practices.

*Representation.* Some museums are endeavouring to incorporate display and interpre-



tive techniques that avoid the 'twin sins' of invisibility and stereotyping by:

1, Individuated displays: Instead of relying on characterisations that conform to popular images, some museums and exhibitions are focussing on individual stories. The touring exhibition, *Mum Stayed Home: Women in the 50s*, tells of the lives of four women from different backgrounds, including that of Els Jacobs, who migrated from Holland in 1955. Similarly, at the Sydney Jewish Museum, it is the personal accounts — written, recorded, or videoed — of Holocaust survivors that give impact, and poignancy, to the displays.

2, Telling the whole story: To avoid a celebratory or nostalgic tone to migrant stories, museums need to look at the whole migrant experience: from the transplantation of individuals to their cultural values and institutions; the responses of the dominant Anglo-Celtic majority to the ethnic presence; and the minutiae of daily life both in the home and in the workplace. Many migrant experiences (past and present) are not happy ones and museums need to have courage to tackle issues of racism, intolerance, poverty, exploitation, failure and pain associated with leaving home and trying to make a living in a new country that can be unwelcoming, even hostile.

... if we examine the experiences of being a migrant in Australia, it was at best disorienting, but much more often it was a traumatic and alienating experience. When we tell this story at the Migration Museum, our visitors do not emerge happy. Mostly they're discomfited and often quite angry. They say things like, "We just had no idea!" ... Museums must continue to present displays not only which inform a public which doesn't know, but also present displays which enable people to identify their own experiences and see them given recognition (Szekeres, 1989: 78).

3, Dynamic culture: Multiculturalism in Australia does not represent 'pure' ethnic cultures. Some museums endeavour to show how the ethnic experience is built upon layers of experiences brought to Australia, lived here, and adapted and modified by the Australian experience. Such a layering of cultures was depicted in the exhibition at the Museum of Victoria (1993-4), *Bridging Two Worlds: Jews, Italians and Carlton*, which brought together two of the cultural groups who have populated Carlton since the turn of the century. Both Jewish and Italian settlers had their own patterns of migration and regional origins but in overcrowded early Carlton social conditions meant 'neighbourliness was a necessity'. Yet tradition and adaption were also shown to be part of the migrant life. Migrants set up in traditional occupations (Kosher butchering, Jewish and Italian grocery shops, special bookshops,

etc.) or settled into labouring or factory jobs in the 'outside' world.

4, Cultural institutions: By looking at the ways in which cultural practices are transplanted from overseas — beliefs and religious kinship system, for example — museums can more adequately depict the migration process.

The process of the transplantation of the major social institutions and their gradual change and adjustment to the cultural norms of the receiving society has been an outstanding characteristic of Australia's migration experience and the central issue of the country's history (Zubrzycki, 1992: 10).

The exhibition, 'Bridging Two Worlds' also illustrated this point. The strength of religious and cultural life in Carlton was shown in the number of organisations, both Italian and Jewish, which the Carlton area has supported over the years.

*Collections.* There are differing views regarding the types of collection acquisition and management policies that will best serve multiculturalism. One argument supports an inclusive approach which maintains that ethnic material should be incorporated into mainstream collections to avoid 'ghettoisation' and the collection of material purely for ethnic displays. A development of this argument is that ethnic material, when collected separately, should be cross referenced to gender, sexuality, disability etc (Fussell, 1991). Conversely, Suzy Coleman has argued against ethnic material being included in mainstream acquisition policies on the grounds that curators of monocultural, monolingual backgrounds generally do not have the tools to deal with the complexities of multiculturalism. She argues that curators need policies that draw communities into their institutions to monitor and assist in collecting non Anglo-Celtic material (Coleman, 1989: 85-91).

Acquisition policies around the theme of multiculturalism are now being developed by some museums. This is true of the National Museum of Australia, the Museum of Victoria, the Western Australian Museum and the Powerhouse Museum (Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences), and the Migration Museum. Their policy statements suggest a synthesis of these two collecting philosophies. At the National Museum of Australia, Professor Jerzy Zubrzycki's proposal warns against the danger of presenting a 'unidimensional stereotype of the ethnic minority groups' that can result from displaying objects of a particular culture without reference to the influence of the receiving society, and advocates instead a 'multi-dimensional presentation of the totality of human experience that can be sub-

sumed under ethnic heritage' (Zubrzycki, 1992: 34). He recommends that artefacts be classified by issues rather than by ethnic group. At the Migration Museum and the Museum of Victoria community consultation is advocated as a key factor in developing ethnic collections.

1, National Museum of Australia. Although policy documents are still being formulated, the conceptual framework for collecting and interpreting ethnic heritage as drawn up by Professor Zubrzycki has established a model appropriate to that institution. Three areas of focus are identified: Cultural background and reasons for migration; Migration and settlement experience; and Ongoing cultural influences.

This program is to be achieved by collecting in specific areas:

- a) Transplanted heritage
- b) Transformed heritage consisting of items made in Australia 'to duplicate or replicate material items from the culture of origin or descent, through to free flowing adaptations and hybrid forms showing the distinct influence of the Australian environment' (Winternitz, 1990) and the 'constitutional practices, customs and forms of group behaviour that perpetuate in Australia the ancestral values and norms but invariably change in the context of inter-group relations' (Zubrzycki, 1992: 15).
- c) Material culture items that relate specifically to immigration experience. The emphasis here is on those items 'created by immigrants in Australia as part of their contribution to Australia's development' (Zubrzycki, 1992) as well as other items which have their origin completely in Australia but which tell us about the immigrant's life.

The selection criteria to comply with these strategies will include:

- a) Items that portray or are examples of life-styles defined by a culture, including items of folklore which demonstrate how a transplanted minority culture tries to keep its links with the official culture of its original homeland.
- b) Items of material culture and documents derived from immigrant experience.
- c) Items illustrative of ideas introduced by the members of a group defined in cultural terms.
- d) Items pertaining to the impact of ethnic cultures on Australian society and polity.

2, The Museum of Victoria. The History Group has drawn up a comprehensive collection policy on Migration and Settlement. Its preamble states:

The Museum of Victoria recognises the importance of the history and cultural heritage of all immigrants and their descendants, and has committed itself to collecting

and documenting the history of migration and settlement. It is vital that this responsibility also be acknowledged throughout the Museum as such an approach will mitigate against marginalizing cultural diversity within the Museum's collecting, display and research programs. (Museum of Victoria Collections Policy, 1993).

The aims of this policy include reflecting the history and process of migration and settlement of all immigrant groups to Victoria; reflecting both the urban and rural contexts of this history, and the dynamics and impact of cultural diversity; the preservation and documentation of multicultural heritage; and the redressing of an imbalance or lack of emphasis on non Anglo-Celtic cultural heritage that presently exists within the Museum's collections. A pro-active thrust is articulated in the aims of: encouraging greater awareness and understanding of Victoria's multicultural heritage, using the collection to address and explore historiographical questions, and offering the collection as a resource (for staff, non-museum researchers and other collecting bodies). The collecting principles incorporate an interdisciplinary and thematic approach, a recognition that artefacts are open to a variety of interpretations, and a commitment to consultation with the broader community in relation to collection, documentation and interpretation. A focus on personalised documentation and interpretation is advocated to 'help mitigate against perceptions of immigrant communities as faceless, stereotypic or uniform enclaves' (Museum of Victorian History Group Collection Policies Migration and Settlement Collection Policy. June, 1993: 27)

3, Migration Museum. Szekeres noted how the Museum has widened its definitions of what and how that museum collects and why it collects to include personal experiences — oral history, memorabilia, photographs. The Migration Museum also uses a loan system to augment its collection building. It also takes cognisance of different cultural values placed on objects, different meanings given to objects and different life-cycles of objects. The following quote illustrates the Migration Museum's collecting philosophy and shows how it collects items that relate to individual experiences:

The work boots of an early settler from Silesia or the tablemats from flour sacks — made by a Latvian woman in a refugee camp after the Second World War and made to pass the time while she waited to hear whether she would be allowed into Australia. Another example, in the Museum's collection we have a tatty looking piece of knotted string with a St Christopher medal at one end. It doesn't look very much at all — until you are told that it helped save the life of its owner — a Polish political prisoner in a concentration camp who, in defiance of camp authority and risking

death, made and secretly kept a rosary. This string rosary came to symbolise his freedom and his deep religious conviction that he would survive, and he did. I make this point to emphasise the kind of cultural material which does become significant once we change the focus of what is of value ... we need to be constantly confronting our own prejudices and reassessing the criteria we have for judging what is of value in the light of what it can tell us. (Szekeres, 1989: 75)

Although the Museum sees itself as a repository for artefacts of many different groups, it also recognises that much of South Australia's culturally significant material is held by individuals or community groups. Accordingly, the Museum is compiling a register of privately owned cultural material (Migration Museum Policy Paper on Multiculturalism — Collections, 1991: 2).

4, Powerhouse Museum has produced an Ethnic Affairs Policy Statement and aims to 'reflect the rich cultural diversity of Australian society' through programs and services which include 'tours, demonstrations, workshops, courses, lectures, seminars, musical and theatrical performances, exhibitions, publications, film festivals and special community events'. The intent is to introduce cultures and traditions of all Australians and raise awareness of the extent and depth of cultural diversity.

5, National Maritime Museum. The preliminary collections policy (1985) proposed that the collecting themes cover: Ships and the Sea; Aboriginal and Islander Life on the Coast and Rivers; Immigration and Settlement 1788 to 1988; The Royal Australian Navy; The Everyday Life of Sailors; The Discovery and Exploration of Australia; Living and Working in a Port; Australian Maritime Industries; Maritime Administration; Sport and Recreation; The Economics of the Sea.

Since then, the collections strategy has been refined to be more open ended, thematically flexible and allow for long-term strategy for development of the national maritime collection. The current focus areas with an explicit multicultural orientation are:

*Colonial Exploration.* This encompasses discovery and exploration of the Australian continent prior to European settlement in 1788, subsequent charting and initial settlement (1788-1901), and includes both European and Asian discovery and exploration in its scope.

*Merchant and Commercial Services.* Encompasses three major areas of Australian history from 1788: passenger travel, the trade and transport of goods, and industries which have harvested or mined the oceans and inland waterways. *The collection area relating to passenger travel in presents an opportunity to collect and exhibit material relating to maritime experiences which are*

*relevant to Australia's culturally diverse communities [emphasis added].*

*Maritime Sport and Leisure.* Covers the history and contemporary life of Australians in competition and recreation both on the water and on the beach (including subject areas of boating, sport, beach culture).

*USA Gallery.* This gallery is the result of a Bicentennial gift from the United States of America (\$US Five million) for the establishment of a permanent gallery to commemorate Australian-US maritime history. The gallery covers the historic material which reflects the common development of the two nations and their maritime connections in commerce, culture, immigration, exploration, technology, defence, sport and maritime science [emphasis added].

One of the priorities of the Museum's collecting principles is that the collection 'will reflect a culturally diverse community and will represent the gender, age and geographical spread across Australia and its Territories' (National Maritime Museum, Collection Development Policy, 1993-1998).

*Public Programs.* The arrangement of public programs has become one of the most frequently adopted strategies for incorporating ethnic communities into museums. It is a trend already in place in many major museums, or being put into place in others. Public programs that incorporate performance (song, dance, theatre), public displays of crafts and craft workers, and lectures, and workshops also have potential to draw in large attendances from the wider community to experience different cultural expressions. Although many communities participate in these programs on a volunteer basis to display their culture to broader audiences, such programs can be very labour intensive and expensive to mount and promote.

*Museums as Advocates.* Some museums are coming to see themselves as sites for promoting social change. In respect to multiculturalism, some of their tactics include:

1, Facilitation. Museum staff may see themselves as facilitators who:

- enable empowerment of minority groups — 'a museum can help empower people to discover more about themselves and learn skills that have been traditionally the province of professional museologists and historians' (Szekeres, 1991: 211);

- restore, rejuvenate and/or maintain pride in ethnic cultures;

- re-affirm the cultural values of groups outside mainstream culture.

One of the aims of the Migration Museum is to present the experience of migrants from the migrants' position so that they are able to identify

with the displays and feel their own experiences are validated (Brief for Migration Museum). And, as the Adelaide Lithuanian Museum and Archives introductory booklet claims, museums such as theirs, are places which can provide a community with a sense of pride, serve as links with homelands, and enable a community to display its achievements to itself and the wider community.

2, Community Liaison. Museum liaison with ethnic communities and the development of a dialogue with individuals and groups is increasingly being implemented. In Australia, The Migration Museum has led the way in strengthening museum/community relations with direct community participation in the form of advice, oral history interviews and short-term loan of artefacts, as well as primary research programs. Similarly the Museum of Victoria's partnership agreements described below exemplify a shift towards the 'dialogic' museum described by John Kuo Wei Tchen in his account of the The Chinatown History Museum, New York (a museum which has directed its efforts to reclaiming the history of the oldest Chinese settlement in the United States and to exploring the roles of Chinese, non-Chinese New Yorkers and tourists in the area through a dialogue between museum and community groups).

3, Advocates of Cultural Rights. Although the concept of advocacy is new to Australian museums, the argument that museums should be advocates of cultural rights is increasingly being promoted. As Marily Opperman told the *New Images* Conference, there is a need 'to develop the role of museums as advocates of cultural rights and as important cultural vehicles for the delivery of community relation strategies' and for museums 'to act as resource institutions ... to facilitate community cultural education about Australians affected by prevailing stereotypes' (Opperman, 1994: 97). Elsewhere a number of museums have demonstrated a greater propensity to radicalism, in particular in the United States. Fath Davis Ruffins has written of the rise of black museums in the States against a background of, and in response to, civil rights movements.

After 1950 scores of museums were founded in urban Black communities, mostly as freestanding entities not part of a church, school or any pre-existing Black institution. Often these new museums were founded by community activists who had worked in the civil rights movement at some level and now wanted to use that expertise for a cultural agenda. This volume of museum building was unprecedented within the Black community ... The people who founded museums did so in part to make some of this political debate, progres-

sive performance style, and Pan African rhetoric available to the community at a grass-roots level. Their museums were vehicles for social change, often speaking to the wider African American community through well-established expressive cultural forms such as performances of song cycles. Black museums founded in the last 30 years are places where alternative versions of the African-American and African past can be debated and disseminated to a wider public. (Ruffins, 1992: 557, 566-567).

4, Ecomuseums. The aim of ecomuseums is to integrate museum activities into local communities and to work towards community development. Ecomuseum principles also encourage an integration of different elements within its community. Although ecomuseums have largely been a phenomenon of French and Canadian museum practice, numerous ecomuseums have been established around the globe. In Australia, some aspects of the concept of ecomuseums have been taken on board by various institutions and projects, but the first museum to fully adopt the concept has been the Living Museum of the West, Melbourne, which also identifies itself as a 'multicultural museum' serving the ethnically diverse western suburbs of Melbourne (Living Museum of the West Aims and Objectives). The region's population is about 450,000, most of which is perceived as working-class and ethnic with 36% of the population having been born overseas. It is, says Peter Haffenden,

Probably one of the most diverse communities in Australia and the world with some families working in the one industry for generations living in the same street as recent arrivals from Vietnam and Latin America, as well as more established migrants from Europe who came in the fifties and sixties. (Haffenden, 1994: 10).

Haffenden describes the Museum's first project — an exhibition celebrating the ordinary people of the region — as the product of an atypical team of museum workers or history researchers.

Ages ranged from 17 years to 57 and included Italians, Greeks, Macedonians and Vietnamese fresh off the boat who had little English. Some of the team had backgrounds in history and research skills but the work backgrounds of most were notably un-academic. There was an ex-shearer, someone had worked in a florist shop, one woman had stacked shelves as a living, another was a tuba player while yet another had been a metal worker and a couple had worked in the local abattoirs. The team chosen to some extent reflected the diverse character of the region — its multi-cultural, multi-lingual character, its diversity of culture and experience of hard times. This diversity became especially important in a museum designed to be by, and for, the people of the region. (Haffenden, 1994: 11).

This diversity, says Haffenden, has continued to be an important feature of the Museum.

5, Democratisation of Museums. In South Australia, the Migration Museum has attempted to democratisise relations between the Museum and its audiences by establishing an acquisitions committee of representative interests. The aims are: to overcome individual curator bias, to conduct primary research in the community to obtain information and make new contacts, and to make clear in displays the subjective nature of museum knowledges (Szekeres, 1989: 73-79). Other institutions are exploring partnership arrangements, community networking arrangements and access galleries to enhance access to museums by ethnic communities.

### CASE STUDIES

This section illustrates some ways in which museums are attempting to address multiculturalism. It also discusses some models that deal with multiculturalism which include culture-specific museums and partnership or co-operative arrangements between museums and community groups. Permanent or semi-permanent exhibitions are limited (except in culture-specific museums), and the predominant form of incorporating a multicultural view is through brief temporary displays, usually in consultation with community groups, and public programming. However, although major museums and some smaller museums are initiating new policies and practices, simply inviting ethnic communities into museums and offering gallery space or short-term programs does raise questions about who really benefits. As a representative of one cultural organisation expressed it, '... cultural specific groups often feel they are unable to access heritage and culture through mainstream collecting institutions which regularly "bait" such groups into short-term projects leaving such groups feeling "used"' (private correspondence). Successful relationships will need to be based on continuing links that provide benefits to each stakeholder.

Examples below illustrate a continuum of institutional/community relationships. A multicultural presence in museums may be broadly grouped into three: temporary displays and public programs in mainstream institutions (often in access gallery space); culture-specific museums; and migration museums. The Migration Museum in South Australia is the forerunner in Australia of this type of museum and, although its Director has described it as a culture-specific museum, it does have a broader constituency and repre-

sentative function than most museums of this type. Its relation to the State falls between the major State bodies and community managed institutions. Two new State migration museums are under consideration. The Sydney proposal is to focus on immigration to New South Wales. The Melbourne proposal is for a national museum which, it has been suggested, would be Australia's equivalent to Ellis Island in the United States.

Ruffins argued that, in a multicultural society, there is an added 'interpretive element' always present — the simultaneous interpretation of the past from both interior and exterior perspectives. Interior interpretations or narratives are those created by communities about their own experiences while external ones are produced by people outside the subject culture (Ruffins, 1992: 512). The three basic models (mainstream, culture-specific, and specific-purpose migration museums) may entail a range of relationships between the collecting body and its constituents.

### AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTIONS

#### MAINSTREAM MUSEUMS

*State Library of Victoria and Italian Historical Society. Victoria's Italians, 1900-1945* (1985) and *Australia's Italians, 1788-1988* (1988 and touring in Australia and Italy). Both exhibitions were a result of partnership arrangements between the Italian Society and State Library of Victoria. In the early 1980s concern was expressed that immigrant generations were passing away and that there was a need to preserve as much as possible while opportunities were still available. Oral history projects, photographs and miscellaneous document collecting, were part of the collection building program.

Under the terms of the partnership, the Society provided the State Library with access to community and oral history programs that resulted in personal, intimate, and well-researched contexts for donated items. The result was an emotional commitment from donors of material. Strong family involvement in the exhibition and displays, valuable feedback, and reunions enabled family memory to become community heritage and further boost collections. Although six thematic sections were included at each location and each image was accompanied by a caption and the narrative associated with the image, these were not static displays but changed their content in accordance with the locations at which the display was presented.



FIG. 1. Street scene from the exhibition *Bridging Two Worlds — Jews and Italians in Carlton*, Museum of Victoria, Melbourne. (Photo courtesy of the Museum of Victoria).

These exhibitions with the State Library brought many more people into the Library and introduced them to the Library services. The partnership benefited both organisations. It strengthened the Library collections. It enabled collection in a caring and scholarly way, and made the Library known to the Italian community. The Historical Society gained through material being taken into an internationally recognised archive, to be made available to historians and Italians around the world. The Society also benefited by gaining access to expertise, to more volunteers and supporters of its work, as well as help with the administration of its collection and its exhibition. The project also offered legitimacy, recognition, and acceptance of Italian material. Some Italians feel they are repaying a debt to the country of adoption and that inclusion of their material in an archive of national significance is symbolic of wider community recognition and can be an 'affirmation' of 'adopted citizenship'. The display produced 'an emotional equation' and has been judged one of the most popular and emotionally charged events held at

the Library in recent years (O'Brien, 1991: 212-216, and Griffiths, 1989: 63-66):

These have not been exhibitions which we at the Library dreamt up and promoted. They have been exhibitions which happened, had to happen, because people out there demanded it, because the Italian community wanted and need to testify publicly to the depth of their local, Australian heritage. The work of the Library staff has been in harnessing those outside energies, inviting them inside, and offering them both the inspirations and burdens of working within a large central institution with a great past and great visions, but not much money. (Griffiths, 1989: 65).

*Museum of Victoria, Jewish Museum of Australia and Italian Historical Society. Bridging Two Worlds: Jews, Italians and a Village Called Carlton.* This collaborative project brought together the Museum and two community institutions (the Jewish Museum of Australia and the Italian Historical Society). The purpose was to illustrate the cultural diversity of Carlton and explore multicultural issue by examining life there since 1860. The exhibition focused on Jewish and Italian communities and used the experiences of local people to consider the com-





FIG. 2. Street scene from the exhibition *Bridging Two Worlds — Jews and Italians in Carlton*. Museum of Victoria, Melbourne. (Photo courtesy of the Museum of Victoria).

plexities of the migration process and its effects on the communities involved (Figs 1-2).

The installation is based on thematic pods and includes the re-creation of a streetscape, complemented by a multilingual soundscape of voice and song taken from the anecdotal information which has been the primary resource and research material. Exhibits are multimedia, and include tickets of passage, exemption certificates for aliens during World War II, domestic equipment, ritual objects and mementoes as well as commercial and domestic interiors, fixtures and contents. (Mather, 1992: 25).

*Powerhouse Museum. Australian Communities.* This semi-permanent display is concerned with people's stories. The fringe experiences of the Aboriginal people of La Perouse are depicted and displays record life in migrant centres, at work, and feelings about home (Fig. 3). The space also incorporates a Community Focus gallery available to community groups to relate their own stories of migration/settlement in NSW.

Although the Museum does not intend to build extensive collections in this area, it does recognise the value of the material culture of multiculturalism to the communities and acknowledges

that, for it to be truly meaningful, it should and must remain in the communities: 'We do not aim to collect this material from community groups, but to help in its display in this area'. Space adjacent to the display is available for public programs which have included: shell workers from La Perouse, a Jewish jewellery artist, instrument makers, Greek needlework, films and workshops (Northy, 1989: 34-35).

Public programs are a major vehicle through which the Powerhouse meets a commitment to cultural diversity. Although too numerous to cover in detail, a sampling from the gamut of programs during 1993 suggests the breadth of the Museum's Cultural Diversity Public program. *South Pacific Stories* (which opened late 1993), was an exhibition which looked at the influence of the South Pacific cultures on Australia. It featured stories of four South Pacific Islanders who related their experiences of living away from their cultures and remaking their communities in Sydney. Films and a program of traditional crafts, music and dance accompanied this exhibition. *Traditions of Tonga* was a presentation of tradi-



FIG. 3. Re-creation of a room in a migrant hostel of the 1950s in *Australian Communities* display, The Powerhouse Museum, Sydney. (Photo courtesy of The Powerhouse Museum).

tional weaving, carving and other crafts by members of the Tongan and other communities of the region. A season of Chinese films was screened to coincide with an exhibition on Mao and the Cultural Revolution. *Spontaneous Combustion with Kooriwadjula* was a presentation of Aboriginal music, dance and storytelling, and a multimedia presentation. *We, in Australia: Images of Asian women in Australia*, dealt with the concerns, fantasies and aspirations of Asian women in Australia. There was also a performance of Chinese operas from the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and a celebration of the Chinese Moon Festival at the Sydney Observatory (part of the Powerhouse Museum). During the summer vacation, a children's program of activities that incorporated a strong multicultural theme was produced. Other activities with a multicultural emphasis included the annual hosting of a citizenship ceremony with programs to reflect Australia's diversity and provision of free interpreters in various community languages for booked tours.

*National Museum of Australia.* Although not yet built, the National Museum of Australia has

started thematic collections representing the immigration experience. A guide to the collections, *Migrant Heritage*, notes that collections already 'present a reasonably adequate documentation of the immigration experience and the process of settlement of several communities categorised in terms of their points of origin'. The balance of emphasis has fallen on 'the experience of immigrants from central and eastern Europe who came to Australia after being recruited largely in the displaced persons' camps in German and Austria in the years following World War Two' (Cook & Zubrzycki, 1992).

In 1993, the National Museum also mounted a display at Old Parliament House entitled *Landmarks: People, Land and Political Change*. This was a challenging exhibition that examined issues of land ownership and use through three historical landmarks in Australian history — the Franklin Dam dispute, the recent Mabo High Court ruling that Australia was not *terra nullius* or unoccupied in 1788, and most importantly for the context of this chapter, the abandonment in 1973 of the White Australia Policy which had been in force from 1901 when the Common-

wealth Immigration Restriction Act was introduced. The exhibition aimed to show how these critical decisions have shaped the political landscape and the way Australians see themselves.

*Fremantle Museum. Focus on Fremantle* Opened 1991. Arranged around themes of the environment, migration, and work and leisure activities, this exhibition aims to encourage people who have not previously had a place in the museum to see it as relevant to their culture and history, a place where they will find a voice. Delroy and Eastoe note that the intent of the exhibition is:

To broaden the range of people who will find an experience, or a story, or a 'place' in the museum, rather than to try to 'represent' every national or cultural group who ever lived, worked or arrived in Fremantle. Each person who visits the museum brings a different collection of feelings and experiences. One may respond more strongly to artefacts from a person of the same gender, class or lifestyle than to artefacts from someone of the same ethnicity. (Delroy & Eastoe: 1992: 3-5).

*Launceston. A Cultural Tapestry: A Documentation of Migrant Women's arts and Crafts in Launceston.* This was a community project with displays, workshops of women's artistic skills and creativity guided by different cultural nuances. This type of program, says Galla, represents a response to the urgent need for community-centred training that will provide for the 'preservation, continuation and management of cultural heritage within the community itself' (Galla, 1991: 27).

#### CULTURE-SPECIFIC MUSEUMS

Culture-specific museums developed in Australia during the early 1980s as a result of several factors: the policy change toward multiculturalism; the realisation by ethnic communities that cultural traditions were being lost; and, a belief that mainstream museums were under-representing the ethnic contribution to Australia's history. Szekeres has argued that culture-specific museums can act as models for mainstream museums in multiculturalism:

It is the activity of marginalised groups who raise issues and bring them to general notice thereby raising consciousness in the wider community ... culture-specific museums are well placed to challenge some traditional assumptions and practices in museums (Szekeres, 1991: 209).

The strengths of such museums include:

1, Presenting dynamic cultures. Culture-specific museums are more likely to deal with their cultures as 'living'. As Joan Rosenbaum of the Jewish Museum in New York has said, these types of museums do not see their cultural

heritage 'as a relic of a dead past, but a vibrant living heritage in which art and life are not separate categories' (Rosenbaum, quoted in Szekeres, 1991: 208). Contemporary social issues and the maintenance of cultural identity often underlie the mission of culture-specific museums. Hence there is a greater attempt to link past and present by using present issues and concerns to explore the past, and vice versa.

2, Internal perspectives. Being able to present insider or internal views of migrant experiences would suggest culture-specific museums are more able to represent the totality of migrant experience. Generally these museums grow out of their communities, or are established by other institutions within the communities such as church groups, social assistance organisations, or friendly societies. As a consequence, there is a close relationship between the museum and its community that not only facilitates research and collection activities but engenders a sense of ownership and control. The stories they tell are those experienced by their own people and they become sites of ethnic identity and community pride.

3, Cross cultural awareness raising. Although culture-specific museums may be inward looking and concerned with representing the history of a specific community to its own members, most adopt a dual mission that also directs their activities to informing the wider community about the particular culture, religion, customs and rituals of that group. The improvement of relationships between the minority group and general society is a frequently stated objective of these museums. For example, The Jewish Museum of Australia aims: 'to educate the general public by acting as a window on the Jewish world, a bridge to greater understanding and an antidote to ignorance' (The Jewish Museum of Australia — Current Operations, 1992).

Culture-specific museums (other than those devoted to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander interests) established to date include: NSW — 1) the AM Rosenblum Jewish Museum, Sydney; 2) the Sydney Jewish Museum, Darlinghurst; Victoria — 3) Bendigo Chinese Association, Bendigo; 4) Italian Historical Society, Carlton; Jewish Holocaust Centre, Elsternwick; 5) Museum of Chinese Australian History, Melbourne; 6) the Jewish Museum of Australia, South Yarra; Ukrainian Arts and Craft Museum, North Melbourne; SA — 7) Latvian Ethnic Museum, Brooklyn Park; Lithuanian Museum,



FIG. 4. *Changing the Landscape*, one of the displays on 19th century immigration and settlement. The Migration Museum, Adelaide. (Photo courtesy of the Migration Museum).

Glenunga; 8) Polish Museum, Sevenhill, Clare; and the Ukrainian Museum, Torrens Park.

Several of these museums, and details of their activities, are reviewed below.

*Migration Museum.* Although not strictly a culture-specific museum, it has similar concerns in the collection and display of the histories and cultures of different ethnic groups. It was established in 1988 by the History Trust of South Australia to cover the social history of immigration in Australia.

Its permanent displays cover the history of immigration to, and settlement in, South Australia since 1836, as well as the history of the Museum's home (the old Destitute Asylum) and the women and children who lived there. The Museum has also mounted a number of changing displays (Figs 4-9). The following list of exhibitions reveals not only a breadth of cultural diversity (ethnic, gender and age-wise) but also a thematic richness.

*Textile Traditions.* A joint project with the Jubilee 150 Families, Religion and Cultural Communities Executive Committee, with material loaned from the communities of Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia (April - August 1986).

*Memories and Dreams.* An exhibition of banners made by different communities to represent their experience of migration and settlement (May - July 1986).

*Lace: The Labour and the Luxury.* Lacemaking as a vehicle for the historical and cultural interpretation of lacemaking as a significant craft in Europe and South Australia (August 1986 - January 1987).

*Hitleriada.* An exhibition of Polish cartoons made by Stanislaw Toegel whilst imprisoned by the Nazis during World War II (May - September 1987).

*Chapters in Childhood.* The history of childhood, contrasting experiences of children from different cultures (September 1987 - February 1988).

*Passengers from Hamburg.* The history of nineteenth century German settlement in South Australia — to celebrate 150 years of German settlement (May - November 1988).

*Strictly Black.* A display which examined the social, economic, historical, psychological and cultural reasons why people wear black (December 1988 - September 1989).

*Il Cammino Continua — The Continuing Journey.* The story of South Australian Italians (February 1990 - January 1991).

*Work it Out.* In the form of a game, this colourful exhibition introduced children to the cultural diversity that exists in South Australia (May 1991 - January 1992).

*Fair Go: Everyone a Winner — The Story of Sport in Multicultural South Australia.* The brief for this dis-



FIG. 5. *Working Lives*, another of the displays on 19th century immigration and settlement. The Migration Museum, Adelaide. (Photo courtesy of the Migration Museum).

play was to examine the role of sport and sporting clubs as significant aspects of South Australia's multicultural life and to show how sport has been involved in the process of settlement and the maintenance of cultural identity. In the process of settlement sport is presented as a vehicle for re-inforcing group norms and maintaining cultural identity; it reflects the history, tradition, cultural origins, social status, class affinity of individuals and groups; and it can demonstrate tensions between pressures to assimilate and pressures to maintain separate cultural activities (1991). (Source: *MigratioNews*, 1992 and Migration Museum Exhibition Brief).

*The Past is What You Keep.* A series of exhibitions about the kinds of objects that people keep. Each new display continues to examine the notation that these objects are associated with important life events and rituals (December 1994 - December 1995).

*Chops and Changes: Food Immigrants and Culture.* A exhibition in three courses. The first — From Field to Factory — explores the gathering, production, processing, and marketing of from the field to the factory; the second course — The Multicultural Market — features a number of interactive displays covering the introduction of particular foods into Australia by migrants and skills and changes to eating habits associated with these foods; and the final course — Festive Tables — deals with food and cultural identity. (April 1995 - 1996).

The Migration Museum has also hosted various national and international exhibitions that com-

plement the Museum's activities, — an exhibition of Chinese embroidery; *Greek Australians: In their own image*, a photographic and historical exhibition of Greek Australians; and a display of drawings, paintings and memorabilia from the Czechoslovakian ghetto of Theresienstadt. An additional service offered by the Museum is its database about South Australia's different cultural groups.

*Jewish Museum of Australia (Melbourne).* Although the museum has a significant collection, largely acquired through donations, current policy is to concentrate on temporary exhibitions due to space limitations. This approach also enables the museum to present a variety of Australian Jewish experiences and to encourage repeat visits. Since opening in 1982, the Museum has presented 32 exhibitions, most developed in-house, which have covered a range of topics including:

*The Dunera Experience* (1990–1991). This exhibition covered the internment of 'enemy aliens' from overseas, many of whom were German and Austrian Jews who had fled their homelands to seek refuge in England, only to be interned there



FIG. 6. *Arrivals Board*, an interactive display in the gallery presenting immigration experiences. The display shows the reasons why people left their countries of origin and the immigration schemes under which they came to Australia. The Migration Museum, Adelaide. (Photo courtesy of the Migration Museum).

and thence 'transported' to Australia. The exhibition told the story of this experience through the memories and memorabilia of participants.

*Freud and Friends: the Jews of Vienna* (1991). This exhibition examined Freud in the context of Jewish bourgeoisie society — its religious life, literature, theatre, music. The display also included a section on 'Vienna to Australia'.

*Australian Contemporary Design in Jewish Ceremony* (1991). The purpose of this project was:

To provide access for Australian Jews to ritual objects that express their own lives as Australian Jews, that binds them to their timeless heritage and celebrates their lives as citizens of this timeless land.

Funded partly by the Visual Arts/Crafts Board of the Australian Council, this exhibition also aimed to

encourage the development of an indigenous Australian art, to re-educate the Jewish and general public regarding the dynamic potential for artistic reinterpretation of traditional forms; to create a new and exciting market for Australian artists (Light, 1993: 23).

*Jewish Museum of Sydney*. Although the central focus of the Museum is the Holocaust, its displays also cover Australian Jewish history (Figs 10-11).

Opened in 1992, its objectives are: to illustrate the richness of Jewish life; to tell the story of Jews in Australia; to serve as a witness to the Holocaust and as a memorial to those who perished in the Holocaust; and to articulate a message of religious and cultural tolerance. A primary role of the Museum is that of education and it is also establishing itself as a cultural centre, not only for the Jewish community but for Sydney as a whole. In summing up the first year's operation, the Director, Dr Alan Jacobs, reported that the museum had become:

a welcome addition to Sydney's cultural life. Not only the Museum itself, but the active cultural program — seminars, films, concerts — the Museum has put on. During the year we have held many cultural events, including a piano recital by young prodigy Simon Tedeschi, a concert with American folk singer Rosalie Gerut and a play reading of *Ghetto* by Yoshua Sobol, its first performance in Australia. We have also held seminars on the Holocaust and related issues, the most important of which was a panel discussion on war crimes with those involved in the recent trial in Adelaide ... During the coming years it is my aim to re-establish the Museum as a cultural centre, not only for the Jewish community but for Sydney as a whole. My other avowed aim is to oversee the process whereby the Sydney Jewish Museum becomes a truly communal





FIG. 7. *Work it out*, an interactive game for children about cultural diversity in Australia. (A Migration Museum exhibition currently on tour around Australia). (Photo courtesy of the Migration Museum).

museum, funded and managed by the Jewish community. (Jacobs: 1994).

*Museum of Chinese Australian History.* Opened 1985. Objectives are to document and preserve the history of Australians of Chinese descent; to hold exhibitions of both local and international aspects of Chinese history and culture; and to act as a repository for a local heritage so as to give visitors a different perspective of Melbourne's multicultural society. Past exhibitions have included: *Glimpses of early Chinese life in Australia*; *Medicine: The Chinese alternative*; *Not such a secret: Chinese societies and associations (1850s-1986)*; *Reflections of the past — Styles of Chinese homelife*. Different interactive programs with the community include public classes on Chinese culture, guided heritage tours of the area, encouraging the public to bring in personal items for assessment and recording and generally stimulating community interest in the part played by Australian Chinese in Australia's history (Fisher, 1988: 136-7).

*The Polish Hill River Church Museum.* Opened 1988. Located in Sevenhill, Clare, SA, this museum is funded by the Polish community. Its

opening was combined with an Annual Polish picnic and renaming of roads with Polish names. The 'main cultural heritage' of Polish settlers was the 'Catholic faith' which is still strong in descendants and also reflected in memorabilia. A draft collecting policy states that the Museum will collect items associated with present and past Polish community and will attempt to document the religious and political reasons for migration (Cmielewski, A. & P., 1989: 19-27).

*Adelaide Lithuanian Museum and Archives.* Opened 1967. The Museum serves as the main depository for Australian Lithuanian material and houses items bought from Lithuania as well as items made in Australia by people of Lithuanian descent. The founders' aim was to help young Australian Lithuanians become familiar with their history and culture and its current mission is to 'collect, preserve and display items relating to Lithuania. To increase knowledge and understanding of Lithuanian history and culture, both that of Lithuania and concerning Lithuanians in Australia'.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

*Access Galleries.* Access galleries in mainstream museums is one of the major means by which these museums may serve ethnic communities who do not have their own exhibition spaces. As evidence of the interest of ethnic communities in displaying material culture, and their role in Australia, the Migration Museum, since opening its community access gallery, the Forum, in 1987, has hosted the following exhibitions mounted by ethnic community groups:

*Serbs Down Under* — Serbian Orthodox Church

*Hungary and Her People*, — Council of Hungarian Associations

*Byelorussian National Artefacts* — Byelorussian Society in SA

*Ukrainian Embroidery in South Australia* — Ukrainian Women's Association

*The Sorbs (Wends) of Lusatia: Australia's Unknown Immigrants* — Australia-German Democratic Republic Friendship Society

*Poles in Australia* — Federation of Polish Organisations in SA

*Craft Exhibition of North European Immigrants: Examples of Past and Present Work* — Adelaide Latvian and Multinational Artists Association

*The Australia-China Friendship Society* — The Australia-China Friendship Society

*Clogs and Windmills* — Dutch Cultural Council

*Contemporary Lithuanian Book Plates* — Multicultural Artworkers Committee

*Lithuanians Alive* — Australian Lithuanian Cultural Society

*Naya Desh (New Homeland)* — The Indian Australian Association of SA

*Vietnamese People: Their History and Culture* — Vietnamese Community in Australia SA Chapter

*Greek Handicraft Traditions: The Personal Treasures of Adelaide's Greek Women* — Greek Women's Handicraft Co-operative

*From the Past into the Future: Latvian Handcrafts in South Australia* — Adelaide Latvian Arts and Crafts Group

*Retaining Estonia's Cultural Heritage* — The Adelaide Estonian Society Inc.

*Threads of a Cultural Cloth: America 5000 Years* — Australian Spanish Latin American Institute Inc.



FIG. 8. *Lithuanians Alive*. Section of an exhibition mounted in *The Forum* (the Migration Museum's access gallery) by the Australian Lithuanian Cultural Society. (Photo courtesy of the Migration Museum).

*Folk Art of Poland* — Pol-Art (Federation of Polish Organisations)

*Wherever there's a Mine ...* — Cornish Assoc. of SA; (Source: MigrationNews, 1992).

## PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

Agreements between mainstream museums and culture-specific museums and/or historical societies indicate a new direction being taken by some institutions. O'Brien (1991) identified two models for handling multiculturalism in



FIG. 9. *My homeland*. Section of an exhibition mounted by Pol Art in *The Forum* (the Migration Museum's access gallery). (Photo courtesy of the Migration Museum).

museums: the Institutional model, and the Assistance model. Under the former, public institutions take responsibility for the collection and development of cultural heritage of diverse groups. With the second model, the community groups build collections outside mainstream bodies but receive guidance from public institutions. An alternative is the Partnership arrangement where the society or group collects and documents material and then deposits it with the institution. This paradigm ensures that both the community

group and the institution benefit from the arrangement.

Exhibitions that have been the product of partnership agreements such as these have already been described above. The Museum of Victoria's current agreements with ethnic communities include:

1, A Cultural Agreement with the Italian Historical Society to enable the Museum and the Society to share existing resources and expertise by establishing a strategic plan for the preservation of cultural material identified with Italian migration and settlement in Victoria.

2, A Partnership Agreement with the Jewish Museum of Australia and the Italian Historical Society to develop a joint exhibition project. This agreement allows the Jewish Museum, and the Italian Historical Society, to bring into the Museum of Victoria knowledge and expertise about their respective communities. In return, the Museum provides both communities access to its wide public forum.

3, A Proposed Policy of Co-operation with the Polish Community. The purpose of this is to avoid competition where the Museum's collecting practices might overlap with those of community-based organisations. It also establishes a co-operative relationship whereby the museum can support and accommodate community needs whilst enabling the communities to inform and help direct the Museum's collection-based activities.

#### TOURING EXHIBITIONS

*Greek-Australians: In Their Own Image*. This photographic exhibition challenged stereotyping to provide 'a rounder, more complex and detailed, social, cultural and historical image of Greek-Australians' and 'to stimulate critical constructive comment as a basis for assessment and review'. It aimed to de-emphasise existing



FIG. 10. *Walking into the Ghetto*. Cement fondu relief by Thomas Greguss. Jewish Museum, Sydney. (Photo courtesy of the Jewish Museum).

stereotypes within clusters of various occupations and socio-cultural activities today and in the past, and to compare Greek-Australians with their counterparts in Greece. Three inter-related perspectives were chosen from which to view Greek-Australians: 'By viewing and relating to the exhibition, the Creek community has absorbed the historical significance of their lives, and those of their forebears, and has understood the need to preserve private documents, photographs and individual recollections'. Public interaction with the exhibition was encouraged to develop a constantly evolving display. At the same time, the exhibition was also injected with local Greek colour from the centre or region in which it was hosted (Janiszewski & Alexakis, 1989).

Exhibitions like *Greek-Australians* have become more viable with the introduction, in 1993, of the Federal Government's program for touring exhibitions, *Visions of Australia*. This program aims to increase access to a wider range of cultural material by assisting touring of exhibitions to regional and remote areas throughout Australia.

#### OVERSEAS MUSEUMS

Concerns about cultural diversity are increasing in many countries. In the introduction to *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (1991) the 1990's was cited as an 'historical moment' for the United States in respect to multicultural and intercultural issues with groups 'attempting to establish and maintain a sense of community and to assert their social, political, and economic claims in the larger world'. This rising tide of contestation over rep-

resentation and the barriers and constraints of museum traditions were noted.

Groups attempting to establish and maintain a sense of community and to assert their social, political and economic claims in the larger world challenge the right of established institutions to control the presentation of their cultures. They challenge exhibitions that overlap with their concerns, demand real power within existing institutions and establish alternative institutions. Inevitably, even those curators and museum directors who respond to these concerns find themselves in difficult territory, fearful of the passion of the debates and often insufficiently aware of the unconscious assumptions that underlie their own exhibitions. Their efforts, moreover, are compromised by the complex interactions of competing parties and interests that exist in any museum.' (Karp & Lavine, 1991: 2-3).

As another settler society, the United States has also undergone the experience of mass migration, albeit on a different scale and under vastly different conditions. Despite these differences in migrant experiences and a previous commitment to the 'melting pot' ethos, the emergence of multiculturalism invites comparisons of museum responses between the two countries.

*Ellis Island Immigration Museum, New York.* Opened 1990, Ellis Island was once the gateway through which over 12 million men, women and children entered the United States. In the early 1980s work was started to transform this neglected national monument into a museum of immigration. The Ellis Island Immigration Museum opened with exhibition rooms, theatres, oral history archive, library and a Wall of Honor bearing the names of more than 150,000 immigrants from 94 countries. The immigration centre's Registry Room (also called the Great Hall), through which up to 5,000 per day were



FIG. 11. *Sabbath in the Jewish home*. Jewish Museum, Sydney. (Photo courtesy of the Jewish Museum).

processed, has been restored to how it would have appeared during 1918 to 1924 — the peak period of immigration into America. However, the Great Hall holds no exhibits. It has been left empty so as to trigger memory and imagination. Permanent displays in the Museum cover the 'Peopling of America', the admission procedures, an overview of the migrant journey from native to adopted home, the story of Ellis Island and its restoration, and a collection of artefacts brought by immigrants to their new home. As well, visitors have access to hundreds of taped reminiscences in the oral history collections. Oral reminiscences in videos, sound and transcripts of interviews, artefacts and displays are used to place Ellis Island in a wider context and to ask why people left their homelands and what life was like in the new home, as well as examining the evolution of communities. Ellis Island is significant as both a site of pilgrimage (with approximately 40% of Americans able to trace an ancestor who arrived through this facility), a national monument, and a popular museum (Perks, 1992; Allen, 1990; Shapiro, 1992).

*Black museums in United States.* These museums represent what Ruffins has identified as an 'internal' perspective. In reviewing 'black'

museums in the United States, she noted that between 1950 and 1980 over 90 African American museums were established and suggests these were born from an 'enormously complex welter of cultural expression, debate, and critique' involved with the civil rights movement. Although the black power movement was initially concerned with citizenship rights, movement activism moved on to address political economic, social and cultural rights. (Ruffins, 1992: 557). Black museums, often founded by activists involved in labour movement, the arts, or cultural areas, became expressions of the politics of culture and some of the most notable are detailed below.

*Anacostia Neighbourhood Museum* (a branch of the Smithsonian Institute). This has become one of the most well-known black museums. At the opening in 1967, Dr S. Dillon Ripley, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, prophetically proclaimed:

For this is no ordinary museum ... it speaks more eloquently than I can say of the devotion, imagination, and the plain hard work of the Anacostia community ... Together, we must continue to explore the seemingly limitless possibilities that this discovery calls out to us. I suspect that museums will never be quite the same again, and perhaps our cities won't either. (Kinard & Nighbert, 1972: 108).

Under the directorship of John Kinard, this museum became a world-wide model of a museum that aimed to enfranchise its community, and enable its community members to talk about their lives and start to take responsibility for their futures. The area of Anacostia, Washington, was predominantly black, with some middle class and professional residents and a large proportion of welfare recipients. Kinard's program focused on drawing the community to become involved in planning of the museum's operations, exhibitions and programs, and on the involvement of young people — as volunteers, office aides, docents and undertaking projects of their own (Gaither, 1992: 56-65 and Kinard & Nighbert, 1972: 103-108). Some of the outstanding exhibitions mounted at the Anacostia Museum have been:

*This is Africa.* A display of the art and culture of various African countries with African students acting as docents.

*The Sage of Anacostia.* An exhibition on the life and times of Frederick Douglass, a black leader and anti slave campaigner, with information on slavery and events leading to the Civil War, the War itself and aftermath.

*Black Patriots of the American Revolution.* This exhibition told the story of black Americans, slaves and free people, who participated in the War of Independence.

*Lorton Reformatory: Beyond Time.* An exhibition of paintings and handicrafts from reform institution, and photographs of reform life.

*... Toward Freedom.* A review of the Civil Rights movements focussing on education, public accommodations and voting rights.

*The Rat — Man's Invited Affliction.* A display about rat infestations in Anacostia and eradication programs. This exhibition had both local and international attention and showed that museums now had to deal with everyday realities and issues of their local communities. (Source: Kinard, 1972: 103-108).

Other notable museums emerging out of the black museum movement include:

1, Ebony Museum of Negro Culture (now the Du Sable Museum), Chicago (1961).

2, San Francisco Afro-American Historical Society (1956). A museum founded by a group of trade unionists.

3, Museum of Afro-American History, Beacon Hill, Boston (1959) Developed from the Afro-American Historical Society of Boston which was a product of a politically active wing of the liberal Christian church.

4, Museum of Afro-American History, Detroit (1965). Established by activist involved with Southern civil rights movement.

5, National Centre of Afro-American Artists, Boston (1968). An initiative of Elma Lewis, a dance teacher who was influenced by politico-cultural debates of the 1930s and 40s, and first Director, Edmund Barry Gaither, a spokesperson for black artists.

6, Minneapolis Afro-American History and Art Museum (1970s). A group of black artists started to exhibit and hold art classes then added a community-based directorship and later artefact collection.

7, Afro-American Historical and Cultural Museum, Philadelphia (1976). By the mid 1970s, the political climate enabled this museum to be established with the assistance of black political power and government support.

8, Rhode Island Black Heritage Society (1975). Founded by a social worker and teacher.

Central issues for these Afro-American museums have been the empowerment of minority communities. Concerns about preserving particular ethnic heritages has, more often than not, been a secondary development. As Ruf-

fins observed, many of these started as cultural centres with a mandate from their communities for 'positive education'. Performances, art exhibitions and classes were often the primary activities. In many cases the collection of documents, photographs and artefacts was a later initiative (Ruffins, 1992: 567). This pattern of museum development differs from the Australian context where the primary driving force behind the move to preserve ethnic culture in Australia has been the realisation that traditions and heritage will be 'lost', that the 'cultural keepers' are ageing and their knowledge and experiences will die with them. Within the growing debate about citizenship, governments have taken up concerns expressed by community groups and incorporated these into the concept of extending citizenship rights into the sphere of culture.

## FUTURE PROSPECTS

Policies already being developed and adopted can be enhanced at both government and institutional levels. Culture-specific organisations are calling for consultative processes to be written into policy documents and to be effected across different levels of institutions. As numerous commentators have stated, and as the 'Plan for Cultural Heritage Institutions' clearly asserts, changing their collecting and representational practices will not ensure that museums adequately reflect and respond to a multicultural presence. They also need to address issues such as access to heritage material, representation on management bodies, the collection and display of materials in languages other than English, and to develop a level of consultation between institutions and community groups. In the following section we review some of the proposals and projects currently under consideration which might help address these issues.

## POLICY AREA

Commitments to multiculturalism have to be better resourced from government bodies, but, at the same time, institutions can go a long way themselves toward meeting these demands within existing budgeting frameworks by incorporating ethnic considerations firstly, as a fundamental policy, and, secondly, into all aspects of their activities. More specific policy considerations need to be directed at collecting practices, funding, and, most importantly, community consultation.

*Collections.* At a national level there is a need to establish policies that will ensure funds are



made available for ethnic heritage material in respect to collections acquisition, management, conservation and research. Here the emphasis should be on collections rather than the collecting body. This was the strategy adopted by the Heritage Collections Working Group when it set out to define the nature and extent of Australia's heritage collections and to recommend means of improving community access to this heritage. The Group proposed that this need would be best met by the concept of a 'dispersed national collection' in which the national heritage is represented by a collection distributed amongst many institutions and managed through a co-operative network.

At an institutional level, a submission to the Office of Multicultural Affairs from the 1988 'New Responsibilities' conference, made the following recommendations in respect to collections.

#### 1. Collections Base

Institutional collecting policies must be developed to encourage collecting which adequately reflects cultural diversity. This must be supported by active field work which utilises bilingual and bicultural staff and will result in positive benefits in terms of increased community awareness of, and participation in, the institution.

#### 2. Ownership and Access

Cultural institutions remain under a continuing obligation to recognise issues of ownership, copyright and access in respect of material and intellectual property that is donated or acquired. There must be an acknowledgement of differing cultural attitudes towards issues of ownership. The diverse nature of private and community-based collections necessitates a variety of approaches to issues of ownership, responsibility and resourcing. In particular, acknowledgement should be made of the legitimacy and significance of extra-mural collections: a major institution [and smaller institutions also] may resource such collections without assuming ownership.

#### 3. Collections Management

##### 3.1 Material from overseas

Collections of overseas material purchased to represent an overseas culture should not be used as a surrogate for the development of collections reflecting the multicultural experience in Australia.

##### 3.2 Language

Bilingual staff should be available to register and catalogue material.

Appropriate technology should be obtained to meet multilingual requirements.

##### 3.3 Reassessment of Existing Holdings

There is a need to reassess existing holdings (which may presently be catalogued in only one context) for their multicultural significance.

##### 3.4 Conservation

Conservation techniques are of crucial importance for the maintenance of historical collections.

The role of major cultural institutions in giving advice on conservation to communities and private collectors is vital. (Birtley & McQueen, 1989: 140-148).

*Funding.* An expansion of the recurrent grant system (budget subsidies) to ethnic community museums through Federal, State or Local Government funding would greatly assist many museums. Although various forms of general museum accreditation systems have been set up (in Western Australia and South Australia), recommended (Victoria), or proposed (Queensland), more recognition is needed in such schemes to accommodate the special purposes of culture-specific museums, i.e. the servicing of specific community cultural needs. For example, the Italian Historical Society, Victoria, which collects, researches, publishes and manages a collection, provides research facilities for students and the public and also meets specific cultural needs of the Italian community is excluded from many sources of government funding because it does not have exhibition space or display facilities.

*Community involvement and consultation.* Although it has been advocated in many platform statements, there is still a failure by many institutions to ensure policy development is done in consultation with culture-specific groups and/or representatives of ethnic communities such as the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA), Ethnic Communities' Councils (ECC), Ethnic Affairs Commission (EAC). A positive example of a museum moving in this direction is the Australian Museum's commitment to report to the EAC on the progress of the Museum's multicultural strategies (Corporate strategy, 1990-92). Other policy areas where there is a potential for enhancement of a multicultural agenda for museums are:

1, Equal Employment Opportunities. While major museums are now introducing EEO programs, there is a long way to go towards cultural diversity in decision-making positions in museums, funding sources etc. A useful step might be for funding authorities to require a monitoring of progress through museum performance indicators (e.g. Australian War Memorial, Australian Museum, Powerhouse Museum);

2, Research activities. Some of the ways in which research activities and museum output may be more productively employed to achieve multicultural agendas is by more thoroughly linking the findings of research activities of museums, ethnic communities and historical societies. More specifically:

- There is a need for closer ties between tertiary institutions, research into the history of ethnic groups, and museums;

- Ethnicity studies in tertiary institutions could include general museology studies; and

- Museums could draw more extensively upon the output of academic research on multicultural issues on which to base museum displays; and

3, Networking. Other collecting institutions are increasingly becoming involved with collecting with the material culture of ethnic groups in Australia (libraries, archives, historical societies). Establishing policies that enable the appropriate institutional structures and frameworks, and encouraging inter-institutional networks could result in more co-operative projects such as the joint venture exhibitions mounted by the Italian Historical Association and the Victorian Public Library and the partnership agreements which the Museum of Victoria is pioneering.

#### THROUGH COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Various models for speaking to different ethnic peoples and for involving ethnic communities (and individuals) have been described in the foregoing sections. In order to present a more multicultural face to the public through their public programs, exhibitions, and outreach activities, museums can implement or increase the involvement of communities at all points of exhibition and program development, use volunteer guides from ethnic communities with cross-cultural and bi-lingual skills, and encourage more co-operative and joint arrangements with ethnic communities. Museums might also introduce the use of languages other than English in labelling, texts, brochures and museum guides. As already described, the encouragement of community participation through access galleries is gaining favour. In a recent survey of access galleries, Madeleine Galbraith looked at the different levels of access in various institutions. Her survey reveals the overwhelming pattern was for museums to direct exhibitions mounted in their access spaces. The only museums listed as allowing for community directed exhibitions were the Queensland Museum, the museums of the South Australian History Trust (Migration Museum and Old Parliament House), the Western Australian Museum and several smaller institutions: the Museum of Chinese Australian History, National Wool Museum, Mirrigum and District Historical Society and the Griffith Pioneer Park Museum. Art galleries or craft centres were much more likely to allow community-directed exhibitions which indicates either a stronger presence of a multicultural agenda in the arts areas in response to ethnic arts workers or the fact that art galleries

have demonstrated a greater openness, over a longer period, to a multicultural presence than have museums (Galbraith, 1993: 10).

A shift from 'object centredness' to 'community or people centred' approaches in respect to the activities of museums is a strategy that could be more fruitfully used in establishing strong relationships between museums and their communities. It would also go a long way to changing institutional attitudes. Edmund Barry Gaither described a five-step collecting procedure adopted by museum director, Rowena Stewart, for the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society and for the Afro-American Historical and Cultural Museum at Philadelphia (Gaither, 1992:61-62). The model provides for a people-centred, rather than artefact-centred approach to collecting, where the 'artefact holder' is the key element in the collecting process. The procedure is:

Step 1. Museum staff visit person/s identified as having some historical knowledge or having possession of an interesting object. Time is spent, often several visits, to tell the 'keeper' about the museum and develop confidence in the museum and for the 'keeper' to acquire confidence in the value of his/her own knowledge.

Step 2. Museum worker encourages the 'keeper' to interpret his/her knowledge or objects to a small group of family or friends.

Step 3. Professional historian is brought into the project to provide a wider historical context.

Step 4. Preparation of exhibition, termed 'giving the material back to the community'. 'Keeper' now has the opportunity to share experiences or knowledges with the wider community at large.

Step 5. Education plan and publication. This records the objects of knowledge and their complete interpretation. Possibly the original 'keeper' acts as docent and shares experience directly with public.

This model involves both a team and consultative approach; an approach which encourages people to value their heritage and culture and thence share their experiences and knowledge with the wider community.

#### GUIDE TO KEY SOURCES

ANDREONI, Helen 1992. Outside the gum tree — The visual arts in multicultural Australia. Multiculturalism has been more extensively covered in the area of arts and arts policy, much of which can be extrapolated and applied to museums. Andreoni's report for the National As-

sociation of Visual Arts (NAVA) is a useful report with implications for museums.

ARTLINK, 1991. Special issue on Multiculturalism. Articles pertinent to multiculturalism and museums include papers by Olwen Ford (Living Museum of the West), James Jupp (Australian culture and the nature of Australian identity), Amareswar Galla (cultural diversity in museums and the need for heritage training) and articles on multiculturalism in the arts in general.

ARTLINK, 1992. Special issue on Museums. Most pertinent are papers by Claudine Brown (Cultural diversity and the challenge of access), Viv Szekeres (Exhibiting conflict — who dares?), Shar Jones (Local museums and access), Helen Andreoni (Aboriginal and multicultural policy) and a section on New Zealand which is of interest in comparing different approaches.

BIRTLEY, Margaret & Patricia McQUEEN (eds) 1989. *New Responsibilities: Documenting Multicultural Australia*. This is a record of the 1988 Conference for Museums, Libraries, Archives and Historical Collections from which policy options for a National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia were sought. Papers cover specific museum displays, collection issues, service delivery, the role of state institutions and Conference proposals for a national agenda. The volume also includes a summary of a survey of multicultural collections that gives an indication of holdings of ethnic cultural heritage held in those institutions at that time.

COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY INTO FOLKLIFE IN AUSTRALIA 1987. *Folklife: Our Living Heritage*. This was an outcome of an inquiry set up in 1986 to examine the nature, diversity and significance of Australian folklife, the existing institutional and other arrangements for safeguarding folklife in Australia (with regard to collections, documentation, conservation, dissemination, etc) and to recommend measures for ensuring the future of folklife.

COOK, Glen & Jerzy ZUBRZYCKI 1992. *Migrant Heritage — A Guide to the Collections*, National Museum of Australia. An annotated list of items in the National Museum of Australia to June 1991. The guide also includes a chapter on the strengths and weaknesses of the national collection of migrant heritage and an appendix that details historical and cultural contexts of several significant collections in the areas of Migrant women workers, the boat people, housing for immigrants and chain migration.

COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM ASSOCIATIONS Inc. 1991. *Australian Museums —*

*Collecting and Presenting Australia*. Proceedings of the CAMA Conference, Canberra, 1990. A number of papers from this conference make specific reference to multicultural collections and representations. Jerzy Zubrzycki discusses the intellectual difficulties involved in developing collecting policies to reflect cultural diversity while Viv Szekeres reviews the origins of culture-specific museums and summarises the challenges they face. Ilma O'Brien looks at various ways major public institutions may take responsibility for collecting and presenting the cultural heritage of diverse groups whilst Helen Light describes the role of the Jewish Museum, stressing the importance of the Museum and other culture-specific museums in the fostering of understanding between mainstream society and specific cultural groups.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARTS, SPORT, ENVIRONMENT, TOURISM AND TERRITORIES 1991. *A Plan for Cultural Heritage Institutions to Reflect Australia's Cultural Diversity*. The Plan sets out guidelines for collecting institutions to enable them to more adequately reflect cultural diversity and redress historical and existing biases. The document stresses the need for long-term and overall alteration of awareness about the nature of Australian society by raising the level of consciousness within institutions and, through their activities, within the wider community.

FISHER, Wendy 1988. A brief description of the Museum of Chinese Australian History in Melbourne's Chinatown. She describes the background to its establishment and gives an overview of function, displays and future objectives.

FUSSELL, Angela 1991. Fussell argues that museums should adopt anti-racist collecting strategies by: consultation and dialogue between museums and communities; mounting representative collections that include ethnic material; and interpreting material to show ethnic community history in the context of broader histories.

GALLA, Amareswar 1993. Galla argues that museums have a critical role in psychological decolonisation and the construction of positive preferred futures through community cultural development. He offers a series of recommendations addressed to various bodies covering training in cross-cultural heritage management to more adequately recognise and reflect cultural diversity. Arguing that training and education are critical factors in promoting cultural diversity in heritage institutions, Galla discusses in-house training, tertiary education and training, community-

based cultural conservation and training and ways in which heritage curricula and cultural diversity may be co-ordinated and further developed.

JUPP, James 1990. Jupp details the various arguments and perspectives on migration and reviews the literature on migration whilst arguing for better resourcing for immigration studies.

JUPP, James (ed.) 1988. A Bicentennial publication which provides an overview of the origins of Australians. It deals with the different periods of settlement; offers a comprehensive set of essays on Australian Aborigines; provides extensive details of settlers from every country around the world from the major source countries of England, Germany, New Zealand and the Asian countries, to those making the smallest contribution in respect to population numbers, such as Tibetans, Icelanders, and Pitcaimers; and reviews policy issues concerning immigrants and immigration ranging from ageing to welfare provisions.

KARP, Ivan & Steven D. LAVINE (eds) 1991. A companion volume to *Museums and Communities*, (see below) but with the focus on how cultural diversity is collected, exhibited and managed in museums, fairs, and folk festivals. The work exemplifies current debates in the United States occasioned by the need for greater pluralism in museum displays as the 'melting pot' concept is increasingly discredited. The various case studies discuss problems experienced by exhibitionary institutions in accommodating alternative perspectives, and in an introductory essay Lavine and Karp propose a number of strategies to achieve this objective.

KARP, Ivan, Christine Mullen KREAMER & Steven D. LAVINE (eds) 1992. The underlying theme of this volume is that museum displays can be understood as expressions of the power of representation: that is, the power to classify and define peoples and societies, to represent ideas and belief structures, and to distinguish norms and differences. At the same time, museums can also be places for challenging representations. The essays provide examples of museums that are opening up to new audiences or communities asserting their rights to representation. Chapters most pertinent to this study include: Edmund Barry Gaither's discussion on pluralism and American museums; Alicia Gonzales and Edith Tonelli's account of the museum processes involved in an exhibition of Chicano art; Jane Peirson Jones's description of a new anthropology exhibition at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery where the brief was to take up multicultural

issues specific to the city; and Fath Davis Ruffins's study of the development of the black museum movement in the United States.

MARTIN, A.W. 1987. Martin provides an overview of immigration and post-war government policies, detailing changing patterns and political and social factors influencing policy direction.

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM 1987. Margaret Anderson discusses the problems and challenges museums must overcome in representing multiculturalism, in particular: the tendency to whig interpretations of history, a celebratory approach that can mask ongoing racism and prejudices, and the danger of superficiality. Andrew Reeves discusses working-class culture and museum collections. Kimberley Webber writes on historical collections and their development as 'national monuments'.

WINTERNITZ, Judy 1991. During the 1988 Bicentennial Historic Records Search for paper-based material in private hands, the Office of Multicultural Affairs co-operated with the National Library of Australia to locate material relating to the experiences of people of non-English speaking backgrounds. The Office extended its activities to also locate, document and photograph examples of material culture held outside public institutions. A number of images, selected for this publication, are arranged in four categories — needlework/clothing/textiles, jewellery, pottery/china/metalware, and objects of everyday life. An introductory essay raises questions about interpretational principles and some ethical questions about the whole issue of heritage collections.

ZUBRZYCKI, Jerzy 1992. Professor Zubrzycki was commissioned by the National Museum to develop a conceptual framework for the Museum to fulfil its mandate to interpret Australia's ethnic heritage and to provide guidance on collection and interpretation strategies. Zubrzycki probes goals and philosophical principles involved in collecting, organising, cataloguing and presentation, and the exhibition of ethnic heritage material. In so doing, he also provides a model for other collecting institutions.

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## CHAPTER 4

### FIRST PEOPLES, MUSEUMS AND CITIZENSHIP

DONNA McALEAR

Museums and anthropology argue for knowledge. Native peoples plead cultural need. (Tymchuk, 1985: 390).

#### INTRODUCTION

Museums worldwide have been identified by First Peoples as significant sites of political struggle in recent decades. I shall examine why and how the public museum, typically regarded as a politically-neutral and educative body, has been challenged by contemporary indigenous interests. These observations will place current indigenous concerns and actions within First Peoples' broader aspirations for self-determination: self-government and cultural restoration.

#### MUSEUMS, SCIENCE AND COLONISATION

In Australia, museums were constituted in the early to mid-nineteenth century following European models. They were principally concerned with the collection and study of natural history specimens. In 1838, a French visitor to the Australian Museum in Sydney observed a curious exhibition of native fauna and plaster-cast heads:

There I saw the numerous, peculiar animals of New Holland; the opossum; the *Orny-thorynchus* with its golden-green fur and changing shades of which they make magnificent trimmings; the kangaroo ... the recently discovered kangaroo mouse. In the anteroom ... I was shown a collection of plaster casts, taken from the faces of the biggest criminals in the colony, after they had been executed. These faces were all contracted and had a strained appearance ... (Strahan, 1979: 17).

This intermingling of unlikely objects personifies early museum displays whose antecedents were the eighteenth century cabinets of curiosities. However, the collection of phrenological face masks presages a growing interest in physical anthropology.

Early Australian museums maintained a focus on natural history for reasons other than the purely scientific. The settler society was founded on the principle of 'terra nullius', meaning, a land empty of people. This concept enabled the colonial government to annex

a new territory, free of the obligation of negotiating treaties with an existing population (Garton, 1989: 189).

Significantly, this precipitated drastic social consequences for Aborigines; deprived of land they were simultaneously divested of a human identity. 'Terra nullius' created a legal foundation

for the popularly-held scientific opinion that Aborigines occupied an earlier and lower rung on the evolutionary ladder, 'primitive' curiosities remote from civilised men.

The work of early museum custodians reflected the moral, intellectual and political ideas of the times, and so indigenous societies were generally discounted as a distinct arena of knowledge in museums where the natural sciences reigned supreme. Consequently, early ethnographic collections accumulated in haphazard, indiscriminate, and sometimes, very grim, ways. George Masters' collecting routines for the Australian Museum in 1864 epitomize early Victorian research priorities. While obtaining 'specimens of the newly discovered Queensland Lungfish' at Maryborough, [Masters] also happened to secure 'the preserved skin of a Black Gin' (Whitley, 1962: 112).

#### MUSEUMS AND ANTHROPOLOGY: THE SALVAGE PARADIGM

Paradoxically, Aboriginal culture was deemed historically worthy of study precisely at a juncture when it was believed to be near-extinct. The theory that First Peoples the world over were dying out was universally encouraged by intellectuals who used disparate theories that nonetheless resulted in a common refrain:

... the savage is disappearing; preserve what you can; posterity will hold you accountable (Gruber, 1970: 1295).

Anthropologists and archaeologists urgently adopted a salvage orientation in their quest for human origins. Indigenous peoples' material culture and human remains were collected, lifeways, languages and oral histories were analysed and recorded, and burial grounds and sacred sites were mapped and excavated. It was contended that the material evidence of 'primitive' races, who were thought to live eternally in 'the past', would collectively shed light on the true origins of 'civilised man'. Thus, during the 'museum age' of anthropology — 1880 to 1920 — a nascent anthropological profession established itself with commensurate authority in the natural history museum. Museums became central repositories for First Peoples' material culture gathered during private and government-sponsored expeditions.



Coupled with the growing credibility of the anthropological profession and its promulgation of salvage concepts, the incentive for expanding collections in Australia can also be attributed to a new-found nationalism; material evidence of a near-extinct people was being lost to overseas museums. The Ethnological Committee of New South Wales, formed in 1902, declared its aim to be:

The acquisition for the Australian Museum of Aboriginal artifacts for New South Wales, especially the western areas, 'before more of these valuable records of the early history of the Continent are further disseminated over the world and lost to the people of the State. (Specht, 1979: 143).

Such views were supported by various legislative measures implemented to afford degrees of export prohibition to Aboriginal relics and internal protection for Aboriginal archaeological sites, such as the Customs Act of 1901 and the Crown Lands Consolidation Act of 1913, respectively. Furthermore, with regards to the museum's civic education duties, the importance of Aboriginal culture to the education of 'every man and woman in the State, and even the children of tender years' was declared:

Like other primitive races, our aborigines are fast disappearing before the inroads of civilization, and we feel sure that every Australian will welcome popular articles on our predecessors in this continent, their quaint customs and ceremonials. (Anderson, 1921: 3).

Governmental instruments of protection, museum preservation and popular education efforts indoctrinated the general populace with clear, yet conflicting, messages about Australia's original inhabitants. Citizens were encouraged to value the remnants of Aboriginal culture as 'national treasures'; a unique aspect of their own history. Aboriginal people were 'fast disappearing' because their 'primitive' ways were inherently unsuited to the advancement of civilisation. This belief absolved the dominant European society of any responsibility in the matter of their demise. Aboriginal people continued to be held in low regard because of their traditional lifeways, while the material evidence of their culture was increasingly worthy precisely because it signified the 'past'.

#### MUSEUMS: KEEPERS OF A COLONIAL LEGACY

First Peoples' relations with museums have been in conflict from the outset, principally due to the processes by which 'ethnographic' collections were amassed. Many European nineteenth century museums rapidly accumulated Aboriginal artefacts and remains as a result of military reconnaissances, geological surveys,

road and railway expeditions, and urban, agricultural and industrial expansion. First Peoples were firstly divested of their land and then of their cultural heritage.

Museum collections continued to expand in the first half of the twentieth century through anthropological and archaeological expeditions based on assumptions of cultural salvage advocated by an increasingly heritage-conscious nationalism. Furthermore, assimilationist policies adopted by zealous missionaries and governments imposed Christian reform amongst indigenous populations now relocated onto well-policed reserve lands. In some cases ceremonial and religious materials were confiscated from communities and deposited in museums under the laws of Church and State. Prejudicial conditions of immense duress brought about by rapid cultural change in indigenous societies — poverty, eroding traditional links to earlier lifeways, and the dispersal of tribal and family groups, and removal for re-education of young children — also drove many First Peoples to willingly relinquish or sell cultural material previously used to maintain spiritual beliefs and ties to land and families.

Twentieth century museum representations of First Peoples changed little from earlier conceptions, despite the troubled and complex social transformations occurring in contemporary indigenous communities. In Australian museums, Aborigines continued to be contextualised within natural history descriptions, and their cultures were accorded a remote, static and near-extinct status well into the 1960s. The March 1957 issue of *The Australian Museum Magazine* indicates the biased state of knowledge available to Sydney museum-goers just forty years ago:

There are ... more than half a million shells alone in the Museum collections. Thousands of birds, rock and mineral specimens and fossils from all geological ages fill row after row of cabinets. There is possibly a quarter of a million insects in the entomological section. Store rooms are filled with fishes, reptiles and marine animals of all sorts and also with specimens depicting the life of the fast disappearing Aborigines ... (1957: 156).

The twentieth century, for First Peoples, has been an epoch of erosion of family groups, possessions, spiritual beliefs, social customs and languages through successive governmental policies of elimination, protection and assimilation. The State museum, as the resting place for the fragmented remains of First Peoples' material culture, has inherited the symbolic legacy of this tumultuous and disruptive time. Its collections have come to simultaneously represent, perhaps ironi-

cally, both the stigma of First Peoples' loss, and, at this century's end, the more powerful spirit of First Peoples' survival.

#### FIRST PEOPLES AND POLITICAL WILL

Recent interactions of First Peoples and museums have emerged as part of a much broader and complex series of political independence movements world-wide. Indigenous nationalist movements occurred with regularity in the post-1945 years in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean where oppressed populations fought to remove colonial powers. These early manifestations of decolonisation on the world stage spurred the growth of post-1960s pan-aboriginal and grass-roots politics in 70 countries where indigenous peoples account for 4% of the global population. The World Council of Indigenous Peoples, founded in 1975, has mapped over 1,000 indigenous organisations, most founded during the past 20 years (Burger, 1990).

Today, First Peoples' fortitude to reassert language, religion and social custom is coequal to self-determination. A brief consideration of the developments and pursuit of such goals by First Nations in Canada will offer some useful comparative insights into the strategies for achieving cultural self-determination being pursued in Australia.

Canada's First Nations — Indian, Inuit and Métis — lived under the Indian Act first passed in 1876. Consequently, they were progressively subjected to racist legislative controls that not only established reservation lands but also determined land access and use, dictated education, regulated peoples' movements on and off reservations, and prohibited cultural ceremonies and entertainments. Canadian indigenous policies of assimilation and acculturation actions persisted well into the 1960s. Nevertheless, many visionary First Nations cultural projects and social programs have emerged since then, including: the Society of Canadian Artists of Native Ancestry; the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation; the Métis Association of Alberta; Ojibway Tribal Family Services; and the National Committee of Indian Cultural Educational Centres which represents 70 centres of various sizes across Canada. Political organisations, such as the Assembly of First Nations, the Métis National Council, the Inuit Tapirisat, and the Native Council of Canada, recently negotiated at federal constitutional talks leading up to the Charlottetown Accord in 1992, something previously denied them. Political will and action have gained First Nations greater

prominence and respect in the dominant political and media arenas. Yet, the struggle for self-government and cultural survival remain ultimate objectives.

Many First Nations believe, like Richard Atleo, that

injustices of the past which can be corrected today are worth correcting simply because it is the right thing to do (Atleo, 1991: 59).

First Peoples promote the moral right to self-government and the ownership of land, cultural property, and religious and social customs that eclipse existing nation-state legislative frameworks historically imposed by colonialism. Importantly, they point out, in countries like Australia and Canada, government policies of multiculturalism and human rights codes that advance equality and respect for the public celebration of the cultural differences of migrant populations, often preclude a recognition of First Peoples' distinctive cultures. Mary Jamieson expresses the key differences between multicultural and indigenous views of cultural maintenance when she states:

The Aboriginal cultures of Canada have no other homeland. If they do not survive in this country, there is no opportunity for renewal elsewhere. (Jamieson, 1989: 4).

Canadian indigenous projects find counterparts in Australian cultural initiatives, such as: the Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative; the Kooric Oral History Program; the Koorie Heritage Trust; and the Queensland Indigenous Committee for Visual Arts. Prominent social and political organisations include: the National Organisation of Aboriginal and Islander Legal Services; the Aboriginal Provisional Government; the Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action; and the Aboriginal Medical Services Co-operative.

Collectively, these endeavours have increased social awareness that First Peoples' aspirations for self-determination simply mean — the freedom to control their own lives in negotiated areas. Likewise, international bodies, such as the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, and other pro-indigenous coalitions like Survival International in the UK, supply platforms for global advocacy. Geoff Clarke, speaking at a meeting of the National Coalition of Aboriginal Organisations of Australia in 1988, had this to say to non-indigenous participants:

We define our rights in terms of self-determination. We are not looking to dismember your States and you know it. But we do insist on the right to control our territory, our resources, the organization of our societies, our own decision-making institutions, and the

maintenance of our own cultures and ways of life. (Burger, 1990: 140).

Contemporary society is more accepting and knowledgeable about indigenous rights than past generations, but for many, change is an unsettling prospect. In Australia, it took the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1987-1990), Aboriginal protests leading up to and during the Australian Bicentenary celebrations (1988), and the recent 'Mabo Case' (1982-1992), to highlight the persistence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social inequities and injustices. Likewise, in Canada, the trauma of the 1990 Mohawk armed resistance at Kanehsatake (Oka) and Kahnawake over Native rights to protect a burial ground from commercial development revealed the urgency of First Nations claims to the majority of Canadians.

The increasing resistance of First Peoples to dominant government policies and their progressive political organisation has generated hope for future reconciliation. The 1990s have surfaced as a time of earnest governmental negotiation with First Peoples, and prospects of social reform and the restitution of past wrongs signal major paradigm shifts at a public policy level.

Canadian Dene and Inuit have settled comprehensive land claims, including the *Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Act 1992* and the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement Act 1993*, which includes the *Nunavut Act* to establish the territory of Nunavut. This new body of legislation includes references to First Nations and government sharing responsibility for the protection and management of cultural heritage resources (Snow, 1993). In Australia, the 'Mabo Case' (1982-1992) resulted in the High Court of Australia overturning the doctrine of 'Terra Nullius' with specific respect to the Meriam people of the Murray Islands (FAIRA, 1992). While the impact of the High Court's decision on land claims Australia-wide has yet to be fully understood, the 'Mabo' decision greatly influenced the Labor government's intensive consultation and negotiation with Aboriginal leaders towards the rapid passage of the *Native Title Act 1993*.

When viewed within this broader political context, it is clear that demands made on museums by indigenous groups today emphasise social justice and cultural restitution. First Peoples request an acknowledgment of past wrongs and wish to engender awareness of their contemporary reality. Through social justice they work to counter racism, and through cultural restitution they revitalise their heritage and generate public

awareness and appreciation for cultural differences. It is the opinion of most museum professionals and indigenous groups that the museum can be a contributing resource and location for such activities if First Peoples proposals for access and equity in the conceptualisation of museum policies and programs, and the control and ownership of cultural property, are respected and enabled.

This chapter examines a range of museum and government policy experiments in Australia and Canada. To place matters in their appropriate perspective we look first at indigenous viewpoints in respect of cultural heritage. For indigenous peoples, gaining control of their own heritage resources is key to cultural survival. A consideration of this perspective will provide a context from which to review and assess the adequacy of the changing policies and practices through which museums have responded to First Peoples' aspirations to control their heritage resources.

#### FIRST PEOPLES' ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES

Native Americans ... have ... a strange and special link with museums that has been described as a love/hate relationship. Many Indians appreciate the fact that for many reasons, the material that has survived is to be found in museums, where it is preserved and researched. The hate aspect comes from the fact that these museums are usually far away from Indian homes, and the materials are hence inaccessible to them. So the Indian people went to the museums searching for ways to restore their culture. For the most part, they were viewed with suspicion or treated with outright hostility. (George P. Horse Capture, 1991: 50-51).

The Issue is control. You seek to say that as scientists you have a right to obtain and study information of our culture. You seek to say that because you are Australians you have a right to study and explore our heritage because it is a heritage to be shared by all Australians, white and black. From our point of view we say — you have come as invaders, you have tried to destroy our culture, you have built your fortunes upon the lands and bodies of our people and now, having said sorry, want a share in picking out the bones of what you regard as a dead past. We say that it is our past, our culture and heritage and forms part of our present life. As such it is ours to control and it is ours to share on our terms. (Langford, 1983: 5).

#### FIRST PEOPLES' PERSPECTIVES

George P. Horse Capture's description of a love/hate relationship between museums and First Peoples is apt. Today, museums, precisely because of past preservation activities, cannot be avoided by First Peoples intent upon cultural restoration. Indeed, for First Peoples, museums have become significant sites of political struggle for control of their cultural heritage. Conversely,

museums have traditionally perceived themselves as politically-neutral institutions whose safeguarding of objects and dissemination of knowledge holds universal social benefit. A consequence of such disparate histories and differing cultural assumptions is that present-day associations between museums and First Peoples are prone to tension.

The basic source of this political disjunction is articulated by a First Nations educator who remarks that

the *concept* of a museum of anthropology is the creation of the dominant White society, but the *content* of the museum is the creation of the dominated Native peoples (Ames, 1990: 159).

Speaking about the Canadian experience, Michael Ames argues that the disharmony between western and First Nations worldviews is illustrated in a series of primary distinctions operative in the museum, between intellectual constructions of art and artefact, past and present, and politics and culture.

According to Ames, where museums foster oppositional understandings between art and artefacts according to western frameworks of aesthetic and anthropological theory, First Nations see objects 'as beautiful, practical and spiritual all at the same time'. So, the museum's 'tendency to focus on only some of these values to the exclusion of others diminishes the original holistic or multiplex meaning' of indigenous cultural material. Museums locate objects in the past, separating them from the present, but First Nations 'give more importance to continuities between past and present and to their continuing presence in contemporary society'.

A Native American holistic cultural perspective is elucidated by Rick Hill, former Assistant Director for Public Programs of the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution:

There is an Indian way of thinking about the world. We believe living things are spiritual beings whose well-being depends upon the well-being of the plants, waters, air, animals, celestial bodies and spiritual forces that inhabit the Indian world. Spiritual law, artistic excellence and particular ways of thinking are very important elements in our daily life. We do not isolate art, religion or culture as activities we only do one day each week or only in particular places. ... All of this and much more are carried forward due mainly to the family relationships in Indian societies. Family is the primary means by which Indian art, culture and religion are maintained. (Hill, 1993: 7-8).

Ames and Hill clarify that radically opposite cultural assumptions determine how divergent concepts of 'heritage' operate in western and indigenous communities. This clash of distinctive

worldviews underscores the potential for tensions between them. Western museum visitors — including women and ethnic groups — have been educated to isolate the past from their daily lives. Traditionally, the museum has functioned as a temple to celebrate historical achievements — political, industrial, artistic or scientific — by and for the nation-state. And, when family heirlooms or collections are deposited into museum collections — either by sale or donation — this is achieved through the freewill and consent of the donor.

Contrarily, First Peoples have not, in the main, experienced this luxury of choice. As we have seen, much cultural material was simply taken; more was sold to ward off starvation and illness. A phrase, often repeated by indigenous activists, 'My Grandfather is not an artifact' (Dunn, 1991), succinctly emphasises First Peoples' living and family links to cultural material. But, it also stresses a political resistance to museum traditions that separate 'artefacts' from people. Such action ultimately denies First Peoples their distinctive worldviews, identities, and rights to participate in their own culture, because, housed within the museum culture, an 'artefact', by virtue of its location and meaning, becomes someone else's 'heritage'.

In seeking retribution for mistaken or missing narratives of their past, and a recognition for their human rights as citizens, First Peoples battle ongoing marginalisation and oppression by the dominant culture whose worldview they do not share. Heritage, for First Peoples, is not simply a nostalgic or analytic glimpse at historical and institutional record. Heritage is commensurate with cultural survival. Thus, First Peoples' perceptions and dealings with museums always rest unabashedly on political ground.

#### FIRST PEOPLES' CULTURAL SURVIVAL AND CONTROL

Cultural survival is not simply a heritage matter for First Peoples, but is a central component of all sociopolitical agency. Tom Owljoot of the Inuit Cultural Institute says:

It's hard to make distinctions between heritage and culture from our point of view. We're concerned that people continue to practice and value their culture ... (Brockman, 1989: 22).

The preservation, protection and national value of First Peoples' cultural heritage has been an escalating concern of museum personnel, government bodies and indigenous peoples, albeit, for very different reasons. Legislative reforms and museum initiatives of the past two

decades indicate a heightened recognition of First Peoples' moral rights to their cultural heritage. This new awareness is principally due to First Peoples' political actions and increasing assertion of their distinctive worldviews. Yet, despite significant reforms and agreements to consult with indigenous communities on cultural heritage matters, many First Peoples believe western paradigms remain largely intact, unaltered, and consequently, continue to disempower.

Henrietta Fourmile (1987, 1989, 1990), points out that vestiges of colonialism remain entrenched in the principle of Crown ownership that directs legislation, while scientific concepts and terminologies still frame museum policies and exhibition interpretations of others. Similarly, Fincina Hopgood expresses a view shared by indigenous groups world-wide when she states:

Many Koories still believe that Aboriginal self-management can never be fully realised until they have complete ownership, control and representation so that they may protect their own heritage without an intermediary bureaucratic body. (Hopgood, 1990: 114-116).

Throughout the 1980s, First Peoples challenged the hierarchy and ideology of western cultural institutions. Rick Hill asks:

Does the public have a right to know all, to see that which another culture considers too sacred to show, to possess another's cultural/spiritual legacy? (Hill, 1988: 33).

Such pointed questions, and the reforms they have instigated, have now led First Peoples, as Ros Langford (1983) forcefully predicted, to the salient issue of the 1990s — control. Museum personnel who have addressed the interests of First Peoples in museum collections and dealt with cultural patrimony claims over the past decade have come to realise, like Chris Anderson of the South Australian Museum, that

repatriation is no longer the issue. The issue is one of control and of empowering the relevant groups to work in a cooperative fashion (Anderson, 1992: 4).

First Peoples' demands for greater controls over cultural heritage matters have been considered in government policy since the 1970s. A brief consideration of selected Commonwealth and State reports illustrate how governments have successively understood and analysed indigenous needs for cultural and political autonomy.

#### THE AUSTRALIAN POLICY CONTEXT

A stream of Commonwealth reports address Aboriginal cultural heritage issues within overarching national heritage agendas since the mid-1970s. The political climate of Whitlam's Labor government directed much of the legislative and social policy reform in place today. Amongst

these was the national review of museums in Australia, (*Museums in Australia*, 1975). This Commonwealth review was followed by State initiatives, such as *Museum Policy and Development in South Australia* (Edwards, 1981), whose recommendations were largely implemented. Such reports have advocated increased Aboriginal contributions to the nation-state through new facilities, improved care and conservation of ethnographic collections, and exhibition development with Aboriginal participation.

#### POLICY FRAMEWORKS FOR ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE

*The Preservation of Australia's Aboriginal Heritage: Report of National Seminar on Aboriginal Antiquities in Australia, May 1972.* This seminar was particularly concerned with the technical, administrative and legislative issues involved in preservation and future protection of the material culture and pre-historic archaeological evidence of Aboriginal heritage, such as rock art sites, rock engravings, natural land forms and material culture held in cultural institutions. It focussed on museum and government intervention and improvements to protect Aboriginal heritage from damage, disrespect and decay. Aboriginal interests are frequently noted, especially in respect of sensitive subjects and sacred sites. Aborigines participated in the seminar, and although in the minority, made a clear statement about Aboriginal aspirations and contributions to cultural maintenance and control:

We ask that in areas where our people survive and maintain our traditional identity with the land, Aboriginal people be consulted about development projects ... in time to express ideas about whether these should be allowed or where they should be allowed. We are especially worried about places of special sacred importance to us and that our people be helped to map these places so that they can be given protection by law as a matter of urgency. We also ask that Aborigines be appointed as guardians or rangers for these sites under law. (Edwards, 1975: 117).

The seminar cast a critical eye on current problems and made succinct recommendations on a wide range of protection issues that federal and state governments need urgently address, including: improved legislation; the administration of legislative regulations; site recording; cultural tourism; Aboriginal involvement; mining and conservation; and the conservation of antiquities.

*Museums in Australia 1975.* Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections including the Report of the Planning

### Committee on the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia, Canberra 1975.

The contemporary resurgence of interest in encouraging and recording traditional technology, decorative arts, song and dance, has stimulated a greater Aboriginal confidence in the old traditions, and a realisation that there were many differences between groups throughout Australia in their ceremonial and artistic life ... Knowledge of the wider Aboriginal community and a sense of pride in its achievements are paralleled in urban communities. Aboriginal people in city environments are turning to modern forms of theatre and other creative arts, to express their alienation and to focus upon the social pressures and deprivations of their people ... This social statement ... is part of contemporary Aboriginal life and could find its place in Gallery activities which encourage pride in a peoples' past and a sense of common identity ... The Gallery [of Aboriginal Australia] should become ... the symbol of the revival of traditional ways and a centre where the customs, arts and crafts of different regional groups can be created, displayed, examined and preserved. (Museums in Australia, 1975: 21, 24).

Commonly called the Pigott Report, this provided a much-needed survey of the Australian museum community, its development, resources, shortcomings and future needs. Whereas the report's recommendation to establish a national Museum of Australia was realised by an Act of Parliament in 1980, the museum complex envisioned to house the national collections and the proposed Gallery of Aboriginal Australia has not yet been fulfilled. However, the report, especially its suggestion to establish a Gallery of Aboriginal Australia, did bring to national attention the need to recognise the contributions of Aboriginal Australians within the heritage of the nation.

In 1975, the Committee observed the importance of training Aboriginal conservators within the Gallery, and also as future advisors to local community repositories, such as museum-storehouses, fast-becoming 'new elements in Aboriginal community life' (1975: 16). The national museum's role — as well as that of State museums — in supporting the development of local community museums through advice and training for Aboriginal peoples is stressed. Equally, the report suggests that local expertise of craftsmen and artists could assist in museum collection restoration programs. The report acknowledges that Gallery policy must take account of the inappropriateness of displaying religious objects in respect of Aboriginal views, and further recommends the implementation of restricted access storage areas where necessary.

Consultation with local communities was deemed necessary to educate Aboriginal peoples about positive aspects of museum traditions and current intentions. Their involvement in the

museum, however, was primarily envisioned to include craft or performance demonstrations, and the commissioning of projects to communities to expand collections (for the museum and community to share), and regenerate traditional skills and education locally. It was proposed that meaningful relations between local communities and the national culture could be developed by instigating various programs, such as: limited access storerooms for religious materials; short-term loans of replicas to local communities; a Gallery visitation program for Aborigines to study collections to revitalise traditional ways; advice to custodians of local museums. Lastly, the training of Aboriginal museum specialists for future employment at the Gallery was deemed essential to the future of the institution and participation of the Aboriginal community.

### *Preserving Indigenous Cultures: A New Role for Museums.* Adelaide, September 1978.

The Seminar recognised the right of indigenous people to pursue their own traditional life-style by retaining and developing their own cultural traditions. It was further recognised that the most dynamic force in the preservation of cultures was the influence of the knowledgeable custodians who hold the respect of their people and continue to live the traditions. The meeting came to the conclusion that museums should strongly reinforce the role of custodians by giving priority to those activities which enable them to practise their culture without restriction or interference. (Edwards & Stewart (eds) 1980: 9).

This seminar was a catalyst in generating awareness of First Peoples' rights in cultural heritage. It involved indigenous and non-indigenous participants from the Pacific, North America, Africa and New Zealand. Topics for discussion included: the role of indigenous people in preserving their heritage; the role of governments; the training needs of indigenous peoples; the role of local community cultural centres; the effect of commercial development on local communities; and the role of museums as educators, conservers and preservers of cultural property.

Speakers reported on museum and First Peoples' cultural heritage initiatives, including: a diversity of indigenous community cultural projects; government repatriation projects in Canada and New Zealand; and the need for education and training programs for indigenous peoples. A series of detailed seminar recommendations for the reform of museum and government operations, and policies and legislation in the South Pacific nations and Australia supports the UNESCO Recommendation con-



cerning The Most Effective Means of Rendering Museums Accessible to Everyone.

*Report of New South Wales Ministerial Task Force on Aboriginal Heritage and Culture*, New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, 1989. The Task Force was jointly announced in January 1988 by the (then) Labor government's Ministry for Planning and Environment and Ministry for Aboriginal Affairs. Comprised of ten Aboriginal members, including William Jonas as chairperson, the Task Force was charged with reviewing current legislation (*The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act, 1974*) and its administrative mechanisms, with special attention to its protection and management of Aboriginal heritage and culture.

A primary concern of the Task Force was to broaden the limited meaning of the term 'heritage', as it is used in most legislation to refer to a static past. Members stressed that for Aboriginal peoples, heritage and culture are inseparable and inclusive of not only objects and sites, but also language, oral history, dance, music and relations of people to land. The Task Force recognised the need for full and proper consultation with Aboriginal communities throughout New South Wales and adopted a variety of public relations, public meetings, draft reports, and extensive community consultation procedures to fulfill this objective.

Whereas current legislation made provisions for an Aboriginal Relics Advisory Committee, Aboriginal membership was not regulated within the law. The Task Force recommended that new legislation be adopted in order that Aboriginal heritage and culture be removed from under the umbrella of the current Act which traditionally provided for the protection of flora and fauna. The new law would be administered by the Minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs (and not Parks and Wildlife) through an elected Aboriginal Heritage Commission (comprised of state-wide Aboriginal representatives) as governing body.

The proposed legislation is based on a set of principles that recognise Aboriginal peoples' inherent rights to their own heritage and culture. These acknowledge Aboriginal ownership and insist on the statutory provision of local Aboriginal involvement in the decision-making, protection and management of all sites and heritage items. Major alterations to the language of the act are suggested to eliminate antiquated and deprecatory terms such as 'relics', in favour of dynamic terms that recognise Aboriginal belief in a continuity of heritage and culture. The

proposed legislation includes: provisions for the protection and reburial of Aboriginal skeletal remains; Aboriginal access to sites; the institution of permit systems for researchers; and hunting, fishing and gathering rights for Aboriginal owners.

*Consultation with Aboriginal People About Aboriginal Heritage: Report to the Australian Heritage Commission*. Canberra 1989, and revised and updated report 1991. The Australian Heritage Commission was established in 1976. One of its main tasks is maintenance of a Register of the National Estate which records components of the natural or cultural environment of Australia that have aesthetic, historic, scientific, social significance or other special value for Australians. The AHC lists National Estate sites under three broad categories: natural environment, historic environment, and Aboriginal environment. Additions to the Register of the National Estate are nominated by the public.

The Aboriginal environment category has unique concerns. AHC staff noted as early as 1977 that few sites were nominated in this category. In 1985, AHC Commissioner, Isabel McBryde, noted 'the need for advice from Aboriginal perspectives on the Aboriginal component of the National Estate', particularly with regard to 'the nomination of places to the Register and their listing' (Jonas, 1991: ix). McBryde's concern resulted in the appointment of William Jonas in 1987 to review how the AHC could achieve nominations from Aboriginal people, and to make recommendations for improved AHC mechanisms for Aboriginal consultation.

Jonas discusses why Aboriginal peoples were not nominating sites to the Register of the National Estate with the same frequency as their Euro-Australian counterparts. He found that the concept of a centralised 'heritage' register and the nomination process do not hold the same categorical value for Aboriginal communities as for western ones. Many Aboriginal peoples, especially those in remote areas, were totally unaware of the AHC program. Aboriginal peoples were reluctant to nominate sacred sites to the register, as their secrecy would then be nullified. Finally, if and when Aboriginal peoples did engage the AHC process, it was when land areas and particular sites were under direct threat from mining or pastoral development.

Jonas' report notes that past AHC operations and procedures inhibited Aboriginal involvement. He stresses that revised and increased publicity directed to Aboriginal communities

together with greater Aboriginal consultation and participation is required by the AHC to increase Aboriginal environment nominations. By 1991, these mechanisms had largely been put into place.

*Australian Aboriginal Affairs Council Task Force on the Return of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Property to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ownership.* Canberra; ATSIC, 1990. The Australian Aboriginal Affairs Council (AAAC), which comprises Commonwealth, State and Territory government ministers responsible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, passed a resolution in February 1990 to establish a Task Force to develop national policy recommendations on the return of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural property.

Initially construed to initiate policy on the return of cultural property from overseas museums, particularly skeletal remains, the AAAC Task Force shifted towards developing a broader national policy inclusive of both Australian and overseas institutions and a broader definition of cultural property. The intention of the policy is that its resolutions and principles be accepted by the Commonwealth and all State governments.

*Into the Twenty-First Century: Recommendations of the State Task Force for Museums Policy.* Western Australian Department for the Arts, 1992. The Task Force was appointed by the Minister for the Arts to review the mandates, roles and practices of the Western Australian Museum and other regional, community and specialist museums throughout the State. The aim of this assessment was to make a series of recommendations concerning: relationships between the State museum and other museums; future directions for museum development and services during the next ten years; the government's role in facilitating this development.

The Task Force recommended sweeping legislative and administrative restructuring in the way the State's cultural bodies and services are governed, organised and delivered. The new superstructure proposed the establishment of three distinct but correspondent statutory authorities to superintend various functions of a State cultural complex. These are: the Western Australian Institute of Natural Sciences (reporting to the Minister for the Environment); the Western Australian Museums Commission (reporting to the Minister for the Arts); and the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Commission (reporting to the

Minister for the Arts and/or Heritage and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs).

An example of how traditional museum practices will be profoundly transformed if the new proposals are implemented is provided by the Task Force statement regarding the future of anthropology in Western Australia, which explains that:

The Task Force ... is of the view that the current Department of Anthropology should not be joined to the proposed Institute of Natural Sciences, but rather should be closed down altogether and its collections (90% of which pertain to Aboriginal peoples) be subject to the administration of the proposed Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Commission ... (1992: 23).

The Task Force's Aboriginal Working Group advised that the current museum and heritage infrastructure in Western Australia disempowers Aboriginal people in areas of training and employment. Similarly, a fragmented approach to Aboriginal heritage management prevails. Aboriginal cultural heritage is very broadly defined by the Working Party to include 'movable and immovable, tangible and intangible, arts, language and living heritage of Aboriginal Western Australia' (*ibid*: 54). As such, it is recommended that existing heritage bodies be restructured into an integrated Aboriginal Heritage Commission. The proposed Aboriginal Heritage Commission would coordinate such activities within a single administrative unit under a series of guiding principles that:

- 1, recognise indigenous rights and the primary role of Aboriginal people in the preservation and management of their cultural heritage; and
- 2, support integrated, holistic and community-centred approaches to the management of Aboriginal heritage.

The Task Force recommendations require a major restructuring of government departments and a number of legislative reforms. The Aboriginal Heritage Commission and its Board of Commissioners (fifteen elected Aboriginal members) is meant to maintain Aboriginal community direction and 'ensure equitable Aboriginal participation at all levels of the Commission's activities' (*ibid*: 56). Aboriginal involvement, particularly at a community level, is encouraged through various methods, such as: the establishment of a Regional Community Cultural Centres network to reflect Western Australian Aboriginal cultural diversity; a Professional Development Programme open to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples for innovative and integrated training; policies to guide relationships between consultants and com-

munities; and validating the role of community in joint decision-making.

#### ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE AND GOVERNMENT: A THEMATIC OVERVIEW

This very selective survey indicates that Aboriginal cultural heritage has long been defined, governed and managed by fragmented, diverse and rotating government divisions. Ministries of the Environment, Parks and Wildlife, Arts, or Tourism have each defined (often simultaneously) how and where diverse aspects of Aboriginal culture are to be located, and how they are to be understood, treated, protected and enjoyed by the wider society.

Likewise, over the past twenty years, a discernible change is evident in the dominant discourse on Aboriginal cultural heritage. Early reports of the 1970s emphasise the protection, preservation and conservation of Aboriginal 'relics' and 'antiquities'. Such terms indicate a lack of concern for its current relevance to Aboriginal peoples in favour of scientific terminology.

While early reports do engage Aboriginal involvement — either as conference participants or committee members — the benefits of heritage protection and conservation for Aboriginal peoples are often cited as potential avenues for community tourism development, or for the regeneration of traditional lifeways. Again, the emphasis on enduring traditions, in view of tourism development, begs the question: 'Who is the preservation and conservation actually for — Aboriginal people or the museums and national parks of Australia?'

Reports of the 1980s and 1990s verify a shift in language that clearly signals a change in social attitudes towards Aboriginal peoples, particularly a recognition of their moral and legal rights. Scientific terms like 'relics' and 'preservation' have been transposed with statutory definitions of Aboriginal heritage. 'Cultural property' stresses the rights of ownership for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples themselves. And contemporaneous and inclusive terms such as 'cultural heritage' mark the continuity of past and present as understood from Aboriginal perspectives. These changes are partially due to Aboriginal peoples' increasing and consistent involvement on governmental review panels and advisory bodies.

There has been increased public awareness of Aboriginal cultural heritage in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. The early reports listed above would have been most in-

fluential here. However, in the main, they have effected legislative reform, the reorganisation of heritage bureaucracies, and museum development (new or refurbished buildings, conservation programs, redeveloped exhibitions and storage). Conversely, with regard to matters that concern Aboriginal peoples most directly, such as training and employment, the last significant training and employment influx (with the exception of the Museum of Victoria and the South Australian Museum), occurred in the early 1980s.

This raises a more general point. Policy recommendations for increased Aboriginal involvement at all levels, whether in mainstream museums or local communities, are being repeated with such consistency that one must consider why this is the case. While the policies and guiding principles may be well-intended, the mechanisms and resources required for widespread implementation are inadequate. As a result, change, while it does occur, is slow.

The government examples cited earlier indicate that heritage and museum policy reports are characterised by an examination of past sociopolitical attitudes to the institution and cultural issues under review. Accomplishments are summarised and shortcomings reported within the context of current social values and government agendas. In view of these data, reports propose a course of action — usually in the form of a set of principles. These principles guide any explicit recommendations for action that are necessary to move the institution towards the proposed visionary goal.

However, whether or not recommendations are implemented depends not only upon the will and motivation of the institution under review but also upon an institution's governing authorities. These may include the institution's immediate supervisory structure — its board of trustees — as well as, the overarching government body — municipal, state, or federal departments — and any legislative mechanisms. Collectively, these superstructures direct the institution's mandate, and regulate its financial and human resources.

In any discussion of institutional policy reform, it is worth keeping in mind that such governing authorities do have an impact on how an institution may or may not respond to policy reports and recommendations. The well-intentioned and (at the time) progressive *Museums in Australia 1975* is an example of a proposal that has yet to be fully realised due to a lack of complete financial commitment on the part of the federal government. We have yet to know what the impact of governmental power shifts will be on the two

most innovative and advanced reports noted above, the *Report of New South Wales Ministerial Task Force on Aboriginal Heritage and Culture*, and *Into the Twenty-first Century*. Both New South Wales and Western Australia have experienced a change of government since these undertakings.

#### CHANGING PRACTICES

To really understand the story of the Indian, you must hear it from Indians. (Ernest Mike, Beady-Okemasis Band, Duck Lake, Saskatchewan, cited in Karpan, 1989: 21)

The previous section pointed out that for over twenty years policy reports have consistently recommended increased participation of First Peoples at every level of cultural heritage planning, management and programming. It also suggested, that, in the main, implementation of these recommendations has been slow. This has been partly due to the time required to transform the internal culture of heritage institutions and partly to the slow injection of the financial and human resources needed to generate wide-ranging alternatives.

First Peoples' increased vocalisation of their perspectives has concurred with successive policy reports in suggesting that indigenous participation is the key to real change. This section examines First Peoples' views on precisely where and how institutional practice might be transformed.

#### REPRESENTATION

Indians are not supposed to have a history. They are supposed to *be* history. ... History 'writes in' Indian peoples only at the points where they mesh with the story of the non-Indian past — with the fur trade, the Riel Rebellion, the white settlement of the west. This process has relegated Indian people to a place that is outside their own histories and given them little or no ability to influence what is being said about themselves. (Doxtator, 1992: 25).

Deborah Doxtator (1992) observed that the residue of racist historical stereotypes of what it means to be an 'Indian' make it very difficult for First Peoples to become involved or accepted in heritage or museum cultures. Rick Hill agrees, stating that one of the reasons museums do not involve First Peoples is because they may believe that 'Indians can't take care of themselves' so 'they can't care for collections' (Hill, 1988: 32). Given the strength of prevailing western myths, the transition for First Peoples to begin to represent themselves through all manner of cultural projects is vast and daunting. Vine Deloria Jr observes that as First Peoples begin to rewrite their stories, they do so with the full realisation

that the beliefs of the previous century, 'demeaning to American Indians', remain widely accessible to all students today. Thus, First Peoples are 'stuck with these writings' and 'old attitudes and stereotypes are perpetuated even in spite of our best efforts' (Deloria, 1992: 598). Deloria proposes that both indigenous and non-indigenous scholars must 'rework and restate ... terms of language that eliminate cultural bias' (Deloria, 1992).

There are strong indications that Deloria's proposals are indeed happening as more First Peoples infiltrate the cultural system and mediate historical archetypes. Likewise, new ways of writing about post-contact history have evolved as historians and anthropologists eschew grand narratives in favour of community histories which involve indigenous peoples. *Life Lived Like A Story: Life Stories of Three Yukon Native Elders*, by Julie Cruikshank in collaboration with Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith, & Annie Ned (1990) is once such example, as is the South Australian Museum's *Family History Project* (Kartinyeri, 1990).

#### INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND APPROPRIATION: A CYCLE OF MISREPRESENTATION

You people love your story of us so much that you spend money on mystical Cherokee crystals, courses on shamanism, and trips to the Hopi Holy Land. (Durham & Fisher, 1988:104).

First Peoples' demands for greater representation have gained them a more visible presence in mass communications networks and cultural institutions. The 1980s and 1990s environmental movements, return to spirituality movements, and global cultural tourism developments, have generated a mass market for indigenous cultural products and information. A multitude of contemporary images and symbols of First Peoples enjoy a wider circulation in the media and greater presence in museums and art galleries (Figs 1, 4). Their popularity has meant that First Peoples, paradoxically, now struggle against cultural appropriation by non-indigenous producers who wish to tap into economic markets or reappraise their own creativity and spirituality through alternative models.

Appropriation is a traditionally accepted device of western culture, as shown by the art historical icons of early modernism (Picasso) to the more ironic and irreverent postmodern strategists (Koons). Whether cultural appropriation is intended to valorise, parody or denigrate, it poses special problems for indigenous artists, for it is largely in this arena that they are able to assert



FIG. 1. *Rock art pot* (1990) by Aboriginal Islander artist, Jenuarrie. Collection: Queensland Art Gallery. (Photo courtesy of the Queensland Art Gallery).

and validate their own cultural differences as distinct from that of the dominant culture.

Robert Houle (1991), First Nations artist, explains that artmaking is both a subjective and political action for indigenous artists. It involves developing a new language wherein indigenous knowledge is used to contest past misrepresentations of one's subjectivity while simultaneously constructing and transposing a new subjectivity. If First Peoples' art is to engage misrepresentation to interrogate the colonial past, and thus effect political and cultural change in any measure, Rick Hill believes that non-indigenous producers must respect the moral rights and still marginalised location of indigenous producers. The non-indigenous artists' appropriation of indigenous material undermines indigenous efforts, assimilating them once again under controlling standards. In this way, appropriation can be seen to be a revisiting of colonial attitudes. Hill has this to say to non-Native practitioners:

You White people are so secure in your power that you rarely recognize that you hold it. Even in the allegedly liberated world of art, however, ask yourselves: Who owns the major commercial galleries? Who runs the alternative spaces? Who teaches in art schools? Who dominates and shapes discourse through criticism? Who hands out grants? Who runs and curates the Art Gallery of Ontario, the National Gallery, etc.? Who writes and teaches art history? ... If such an imbalance of power exists amongst this 'alternative' art com-

munity then what, I ask, is my alternative to your alternative? (Hill, 1992:16).

Hill's concerns are echoed in Australia, where the courts recently dealt with Aboriginal artist, John Bulun-Bulun's claim of copyright infringement. In a precedent setting case, the artist was awarded \$135,000 damages because his painting, *Sacred Waterhole*, was appropriated, without his permission, on T-shirts (Birnie Danzker, 1990). Bulun-Bulun's painting, accompanied by the illegitimate T-shirts, was exhibited in the Queensland Art Gallery's exhibition, *Balance 1990: Views, Visions and Influences* (1990), to highlight the seriousness of this debate for Aboriginal artists — in both its economic and spiritual dimensions — to the predominantly white audience.

The appropriation of intellectual property — images, stories, spiritual symbolism — is plainly linked to issues of land and cultural property which are more predominantly discussed in the context of restitution. Indeed, Vine Deloria Jr has predicted that greater collaboration between Indian spiritual leaders and archaeologists will be needed to protect and accurately record declared sacred sites and their surroundings because elders 'are very worried that [sites] will be invaded by hundreds of New Ager's looking for a spiritual experience' (Deloria, 1992: 598).

#### RESTITUTION OF CULTURAL PROPERTY

Australian archaeologists are just now beginning to discover what Aboriginal people have always known. We have been here for a very, very long time, and furthermore, much to the disgust of some, have no intention of going away even in the light of attempted genocide. Our ancient history is locked in a cultural memory, which in turn is locked in the alcheringa, or as it has been re-named (incidentally, without our permission), the Dreamtime. Non-Aboriginal Australians will eventually receive this history for it will be translated into forms which all can understand by the Aboriginal people themselves. This not only for our benefit, which is sorely needed, but for the benefit of all races. This in spite of the fact that the present constitution of Australia provides little to Aborigines in terms of cultural survival. (Oodgeroo Noonuccal, 1989: 3).

In February 1992, Canadian museum and government workers, academics and First Nations assembled in Ottawa to review and discuss the recommendations of the Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoples. *Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships Between Museums and First Peoples* (CMA & AFN, 1992), was co-sponsored by the Canadian Museum Association and the Assembly of First Nations, and was the result of a two year cross-Canada consultation with Native peoples and museum workers. Addressing the conference on repatriation issues, Rick Hill simply articulated that museums need to

return objects back to the people who need them, to rebury the dead with the objects with which they were originally interred, and to refrain from ever doing it again. (cited in Harrison, 1992: 10).

Human remains and sacred objects have been central in debates of cultural patrimony since the mid-seventies. Although most museums ceased collecting and displaying human remains decades ago, the majority of State institutions in Australia are required by law to continue to act as repositories for such culturally sensitive materials. In respect of this, and despite legislative strictures, museum policies now concur that

remains of individuals who have died since contact with European people ... will be dealt with in accordance with the wishes of the deceased or their descendants (CAMA, 1993: 11).

First Peoples' wishes for respect and return of cultural patrimony have been largely honored by museums in Canada and Australia. Repatriation claims sometimes result in the outright return of sacred materials or the reburial of human remains. But, generally speaking, museums have not experienced the massive requests for ethnographic collections predicted in the late 1970s to mid-1980s. Instead, repatriation appears to have paved the way for new dialogues and interactions between museums and First Peoples. The key to these innovative developments is the factor of First Peoples' participation.

The skills of archaeologists are often called upon by First Peoples for clarifying the status of sacred sites. This was the case at Wanuskewin Heritage Park, Saskatchewan, where seven tribes have revived sacred ceremonies at an archaeological site developed into a public heritage centre by the Province with total First Nations direction (Karpan, 1989). First Peoples are increasingly working with archaeologists on research projects to prove their continual occupation of land. These records are often required by indigenous peoples seeking legal protection for sacred sites or for the settlement of

land claims (Deloria, 1992). There is every indication that even more interchange will develop if First Peoples' views are respected and incorporated into cultural heritage approaches, especially as they begin to join the profession.

#### ACCESS AND EQUITY

There has to be an interchange. It has to be at a planning level, and at a curatorial level. It can no longer be people saying, 'We have an advisory committee, and they're going to be part of public programming. At five o'clock, we'll have a dance troupe come in and dance, and at seven o'clock, someone will come in and chew some muktuk and that will be Indian participation.' (Tom Hill, cited in Anderson 1991: 19)

Access and equity for First Peoples is being promoted in various aspects of cultural heritage, including: collections access and use; a re-examination of collections and their use; and employment and training. Greater access to collections can sometimes mean prohibitions for the public at large. This has been the case in Australia since the mid-80s, where men's and women's sacred/secret materials have been isolated from the public in restricted storage areas for use by local Aborigines with custodial and spiritual privileges in these materials. Since museums have taken such actions in respect of Aboriginal religious customs, they generally report an increased use of collections by elders and members of the broader Aboriginal community. Richard Robins (in press) reports that the Queensland Museum's collection of Australian anthropological materials is utilised predominantly by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who now represent 90% of visitors. Robins attributes this growing interest to his Aboriginal colleague, Michael Aird (and Aird's predecessor, Tina Baum), and their particular ways of working with the Aboriginal community in Brisbane and south-east Queensland.

Hetti Perkins, curator at Boomalli Aboriginal artists Co-operative, Sydney, agrees with Robins. The presence of Aboriginal employees in cultural institutions is integral to institutional change, because until museums prove otherwise, 'many Koorie people believe that the Gallery has nothing to do with them' (Stephen et al, 1993: 13). Aboriginal curators like Perkins insist on a re-examination of inherited museum classification systems — art, history and ethnography — and thus their contributions are immensely valuable to the museum's post-colonial transformation. Such has been the case at Australia's National Gallery, where Curator of Aboriginal Art, Wally Caruna, has integrated depictions of Aborigines by Euro-Australians with Aboriginal artworks to



alter the dominant European art historical narrative. This has created space for a more broadly informed and cross-cultural representation of Aboriginal and European relations.

Evidently, as First Peoples move into positions of greater influence in the museum culture — as curators, educators, policy-makers, managers and trustees — traditions will be challenged and changed with greater frequency. 'Case Studies I' discusses exactly how museums have introduced programs that respect and involve First Peoples, while 'Case Studies II' examines a number of ways indigenous peoples have acted to establish cultural projects in their own communities.

### CASE STUDIES I: MUSEUM AND PROFESSIONAL INITIATIVES

The time has come ... for museums to work more closely with Native Americans, rather than simply study and exhibit their histories. Relations of trust must be built up over time. Providing opportunities for cultural empowerment is one way to begin ... Empowering others to speak for themselves does not mean losing one's own voice, but finding it. (Ames, 1990: 171).

### THE ROLE OF MORAL RESPONSIBILITY IN INSTITUTIONAL REFORM

Australian and Canadian museums have responded positively to First Peoples' requests to respect differing worldviews and gain equitable representation in contemporary museum culture. Today, most museum workers would agree that

the continuing responsibility of museums to respond to the concerns of indigenous people is a moral imperative (CAMA, 1993: 7).

Initially, however, museum actions were re-active, prompted, in the main, by First Peoples' repatriation claims on collections. Returns of cultural material took place in Canada and Australia as early as 1978, prior to official policy implementation or governmental intervention (MacDonald, 1993; Specht et al, 1991). Recent national museum policy initiatives in Canada and Australia reflect the profession's aspirations to shift from a re-active stance to pro-active ground. Additionally, they indicate the profession's attempt to communicate their aims and efforts to First Peoples and the broader public.

In 1992, the Canadian Museums Association and Assembly of First Nations Task Force Report, *Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships Between Museums and First Peoples*, urged Canadian museum professionals to develop

an ethical framework and strategies for Aboriginal Nations to represent their history and culture in concert with cultural institutions (CMA & AFN, 1992: 2).

One year later, the Council of Australian Museum Associations released its counterpart, *Previous Possessions, New Obligations: Policies for Museums in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* (CAMA, 1993). The principles and policies adopted in these reports attempt to balance the interests of museums, First Peoples and the public at large.

While most museums would acknowledge that much remains to be done in building bridges and initiating new ways of working with First Peoples, it is worth stating that the issues of greatest concern have, in the main, been addressed by Australian and Canadian museums in advance of legislative and government proposals. Moreover, these transformations have been achieved without the injections of financial and human resources required to instigate such new and labour-intensive programs. Perhaps this is why museum workers in these countries remain skeptical of legislative measures and continue to emphasise that the moral recognition of First Peoples' rights by museum professionals is imperative for museum reform. Concurrently, they appreciate that legislation is ultimately required to uphold moral responsibility and ethical and professional codes; especially to enforce change within those institutions which will not relinquish traditional mores. This shared attitude between Australian and Canadian museum professionals is well-supported by a brief historical overview that illustrates the maxim, 'If there's a will there's a way'.

### AUSTRALIAN AND CANADIAN MUSEUM PRACTICE: PROGRESS IN REVIEW

In respect of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues, Australian museums began to implement training and employment programs in the late 1970s (Lofgren & Specht, 1979). Thus far, essential changes have occurred in the following areas: documentation and inventories of state and nation-wide ethnographic collections (Meehan & Bona, 1986); the renovation of storage facilities, establishment of restricted access areas for secret/sacred items, and return of cultural property and policy formation in this area (Anderson, 1986, 1990a, 1990b); the representation of indigenous peoples on staff, boards and advisory committees (Sculthorpe, 1989); the redefinition of permanent displays (Hemming, Jones & Clarke, 1989) and contemporary art exhibition initiatives (Sutton, 1990). The Australian Museum's Aboriginal Collections Policy Document, in contrast to past guidelines, now announces that 'collections emphasis will be on



FIG. 2. Southern Kwakwaka'wakw house at Alert Bay, Canada. W. M. Halliday photo, 1914. (Photo courtesy of the Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, British Columbia).

contemporary culture' (Tacon, 1993: 4). Nation-wide, Australian 'museums support the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to self-determination in respect of cultural heritage matters' (CAMA, 1994: 9).

Canadian museum transformations generally parallel Australian developments. However, the beginnings of First Nations' participation in museums can be traced to the employment of Native artists and crafts people for collections development as early as the 1940s on the Northwest Coast (Inglis & Abbott, 1991). Repatriation efforts in Canada also developed early, with the Canadian Museum of Civilization's 1978 repatriation of the Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch collections to Alert Bay and Cape Mudge (Cranmer Webster, 1992; MacDonald, 1993) (Figs 2-3). Today, museums consult and collaborate with First Nations on all aspects of museum activity — from collections storage and exhibition production (Conaty, 1989), to curatorial perspectives and interpretations (McMaster & Martin, 1992; Laforet, 1992), and policy development (Byrne, 1993). Perhaps even more importantly, museums,

like the Canadian Museum of Civilization, are often used as meeting places for First Peoples' events. The museum hosted the *Indigena 500 Conference* in 1991, where 'indigenous elders, women and youth of the Americas' shared 'their culture, values and vision' and offered 'guidance to indigenous leaders in the determination of a framework for establishing a dialogue between indigenous peoples and other societies' (Indigena 500 Committee, 1991).

A selective number of case studies indicate how Australian and Canadian museums have broadened traditional practice to respect and include First Peoples' views. These touch on national policy development, repatriation instances, and the revitalisation and reinterpretation of anthropology collections for exhibition purposes by indigenous and non-indigenous cultural workers.

#### NATIONAL MUSEUM POLICY: ENDORSING ABORIGINAL PEOPLES' PRIMARY RIGHTS

The Council of Australian Museums Associations (CAMA, now Museums Australia) began



FIG. 3. Surrendered Kwakwaka'wakw regalia, Alert Bay, Canada. W. M. Halliday photo, 1922. (Photo courtesy of the Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, British Columbia).

developing a national policy paper on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage issues relevant to museums in 1991. The resulting document, *Previous Possessions, New Obligations: Policies for Museums in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, was released in December 1993.

*Previous Possessions, New Obligations* is a deliberately practical document. Its introduction and preamble concisely summarise the relationships and issues that have been crucial to museum and First Peoples' relations over the past twenty years. Its guiding principles and detailed policies aim to 'guide museums in framing their own procedures for dealing with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their cultural heritage' (CAMA, 1993: 3). The document consolidates the current position of a minority of influential Australian museums on indigenous cultural heritage matters in the hope that museums throughout Australia will adopt similar policies to foster new relations with Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The document's first principle states that 'museums support the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to self-determination in respect of cultural heritage matters' (9). Therefore, its policies are based on the understanding that 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have special rights in respect of their cultural heritage: they have primary rights' (1). Museums are encouraged to acknowledge 'the totality of indigenous cultures' and their 'holistic' perspective, and to 'act accordingly' (6-7). Significantly, the document promotes 'consultation between museums and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' as 'the essential strategy' in changing attitudes and improving relationships (7). *Previous Possessions, New Obligations* stresses that 'the continuing responsibility of museums to respond to the concerns of indigenous people is a moral imperative' (7).

*Previous Possessions, New Obligations* was generally welcomed and its principles and policies endorsed by most museums, bureaucrats and Aboriginal organisations and spokespersons. However, some concerns or divergent opinions



FIG. 4. Southern Kwakwaka'wakw dance costume made and worn by Calvin Hunt c. 1980s. (Photo courtesy of the Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, British Columbia).

were indicated. Gladstone Regional Art Gallery and Museum Director, Pamela Whitlock, expressed 'concern that policies [were] written with national and state institutions in mind' (24). Also commenting from the viewpoint of small museums, Geoff Speirs of the History Trust of South Australia anticipated 'a mixed reception among private museums and some in towns where relations between [Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal] people "are at flashpoint"' (30). Queensland Museum Director, Alan Bartholomai, while generally endorsing the document as being in accordance with Queensland Museum policy, expressed 'some difficulty with

some aspects of policy on human remains as to policies concerning all cultures' (26).

Overall, the majority of Aboriginal respondents were extremely positive. Northern Land Council Director, Michael Dodson, welcomed 'the broad direction of the policy' (26), and Kimberly Land Council Director, Peter Yu, urged the policy to commit 'museums to support ... Aboriginal self-determination'. Yu stressed that 'community centred approaches are important' and indicated that 'the policy should be identified as the key priority for all museums and government ministers to implement' (25).

#### REPATRIATION AS A DIALOGIC PROCESS: LINKING THE PAST TO THE FUTURE

In museums — given the right sort of relationship — Aboriginal groups can make statements about themselves. (Anderson, 1990: 178).

The repatriation of cultural property to First Peoples is an involved and difficult process for museums, and it is equally complex for the indigenous community concerned. A decision on whether or not to return cultural material requires the museum worker to balance the museum's responsibilities to broader research and public education with the rights and needs of the indigenous community in question. Similarly, indigenous communities assume tremendous responsibility in regaining control of lost material that must now be reintegrated into family or community life. For these reasons, museum workers and indigenous peoples seldom view repatriation as a strictly political issue, but rather as a process that establishes long term associations between a museum and a community, and ultimately, holds serious cultural implications for future relations.

The South Australian Museum's experience with the repatriation of secret/sacred materials has resulted in enriched collaborations with indigenous communities. It holds the world's largest collection of Central Australian secret/sacred objects, and this explains, at least partially, why the museum was one of the first in Australia to respond seriously to repatriation claims in the early 1980s. Director, Chris Anderson, encourages museums to enter dialogues with Aboriginal peoples that are not strictly about objects, but focus on the long term sociocultural location and use of the objects: the people and their communities. As Anderson puts it:

Returning objects is first and foremostly a social act and it is seen as such by Aborigines. ... The return of objects has to be viewed as the establishment of a long term relationship between museums, their researchers and at one level, particular Aboriginal men

and at another, whole groups within communities, if not communities themselves. (Anderson, 1986: 9).

*Custodianship of Sacred Objects Project.* Anderson's philosophy has guided the South Australian Museum's Custodianship of Sacred Objects Project in Central Australia. The project stresses extensive research of collections and community fieldwork to consult with elders and custodians prior to making decisions about the return of an object. Policies for the return of secret/sacred objects were drafted in 1986. The results of repatriation programs have been varied. At 1991, 130 restricted objects had been returned to the custodianship of Central Australian elders (Anderson, 1991). Conversely, elders have frequently asked that the museum continue to hold sacred objects in its restricted access storerooms. Some previously restricted materials have been freed for exhibition and research due to the knowledge and counsel imparted by elders.

The South Australian Museum's collections have not been diminished through repatriation. Instead, because Aboriginal awareness of museum programs has increased through community consultations and because senior Aboriginal men have visited the collections and storage facilities, the South Australian Museum has been asked to act as a temporary custodian for many sacred objects formerly held in the community. Likewise, its other programs, such as archives and exhibitions, have been greatly enriched by Aboriginal participation (Anderson, 1990a).

*The Family History Project.* Repatriation at the South Australian Museum has given rise to new collaborative projects with Aboriginal communities. *The Family History Project* demonstrates how museum archives can vitally assist the restoration of heritage and identity to Aboriginal peoples. The project's main aim is to research and make available to Aboriginal families the photographs and genealogies of thousands of Aboriginal people documented by Norman Tindale and Joseph Birdsell on Aboriginal settlements from 1928 to 1957. Living under the Aboriginal Act, many families were fractured and dispersed to settlements throughout Australia, distant from their homelands and lost to their relations. Many children grew up without knowledge of their origins or Aboriginal identity.

Doreen Kartinyeri, a Ngarrindjeri historian, was removed from her family as a child. She was the first Aboriginal person to make use of this archive in the early 1980s, and had already published two South Australian family genealogies

when appointed Aboriginal Research Officer to the project in early 1988. *The Family History Project* is now staffed with three Aboriginal Research Officers and aided by various museum anthropologists. Project teams research and publish the genealogies of particular families in South Australia through archival work. Community consultation is essential to shedding light on the collection. When complete, this information is dispersed to the relevant family or community. Likewise, Aboriginal peoples are encouraged to make use of the material at the museum with the aid of staff members. *The Family History Project* shows how data originally collected for anthropological ends (in this case, academic genetic studies) can be reconstituted to aid 'in giving back to Aboriginal people of Australia their identity' (Kartinyeri, 1990: 12) while simultaneously providing the South Australian Museum with 'important demographic and historical material' (Anderson, 1990a: 177).

*Diversification of Visual Displays through Aboriginal Involvement.* The South Australian Museum's exhibition programming has also been generously enhanced by Aboriginal participation. Its redeveloped permanent exhibition, *Ngurunderi: An Aboriginal Dreaming* (Hemming, Jones & Clarke, 1989), depended on years of consultation with Aboriginal people from the lower Murray River region, as did the temporary exhibition, *Art and Land: Aboriginal Sculptures of the Lake Eyre Region* (Jones & Sutton, 1986). Contemporary exhibitions have been undertaken, such as *Dreamings* (Sutton, 1988), which featured

a cross-section of Australian Aboriginal religious art in the classical tradition from three contrasting areas in Australia, the tropical north, the arid centre and the temperate southeast (Anderson, 1990c: 155).

The South Australian Museum's diverse activities and its various kinds of engagements with many Aboriginal communities clearly demonstrate how repatriation actions need not be considered as singular events nor represent a loss to museums. Instead, the South Australian Museum's philosophy proposes that collections are for people, and therefore require a broader and multilevelled social context of interpretation and use. This dialogic approach has permeated all aspects of the museum's programming activities. Collections have been revitalised in ways that increase their traditional and contemporary relevance to both Aboriginal and Euro-Australian peoples.

# HUMAN REMAINS CONTROVERSY: REBURIAL OR COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH?

In Australia, while collaborative efforts that balance the need for research and repatriation of skeletal materials have been successfully developed throughout the 1980s (Lampert, 1983; Pardoe, 1990; CAMA, 1993), what some would call more radical solutions have also been adopted at various stages. Legal proceedings against the Tasmanian Museum by that State's Aboriginal community in 1982 led to the return, and subsequent reburial, of nineteenth-century Tasmanian skeletal remains known as the Crowther Collection. While most Australian State museum policies now concur that 'the remains of individuals who have died since contact with European people in Australia will be dealt with in accordance with the wishes of the deceased or their descendants or the relevant community', thus perhaps absolving the fate of the Crowther Collection (CAMA, 1993: 11), the repatriation of prehistory human remains continues to be seriously debated world-wide.

The Museum of Victoria has undertaken significant skeletal remains reburial exercises which are considered by many to exemplify a radical solution. Legislative directives, in tandem with local Aboriginal community requests for return and reburial that were supported by the museum's Aboriginal Advisory Committee, have collectively caused the repatriation of two pre-historic collections of skeletal remains: the Murray Black Collection (to a Melbourne burial site) in June 1989, and the Kow Swamp Collection (to the Echuca community) in August 1990.

The Murray Black skeletal materials came from five burial grounds in southeastern Australia and represented the largest single collection held in this country. It was excavated (some would say grave-robbed) by George Murray Black, a pastoralist in South Gippsland. Encouraged by anatomists, the amateur archaeologist unearthed some 1800 individual remains, some 400 generations removed, between 1929 to 1950. These were initially deposited in Canberra's Institute of Anatomy and the University of Melbourne (Mulvaney, 1988), until they were legally transferred to the Museum of Victoria in 1984 under the *Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act 1972*. The Kow Swamp collection came to the museum under more typical present-day circumstances. Alan Thorne, Australian National University archaeologist, discovered the Kow Swamp site in 1967 and unearthed some 40 individual burials between 1968 and 1972 in a

salvage operation to recover the remains from total demise due to the development of an irrigation channel.

Repatriation claims on the Murray Black and Kow Swamp collections were initiated by two Koorie communities in Victoria and proceeded through legal channels. The museum returned the materials in accordance with the Commonwealth's *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Amendment Act 1987*, "Part IIA Victorian Aboriginal Cultural Heritage". Significant provisions of the Act determined the outcomes of these claims:

21X. (1) If a local Aboriginal community has reason to believe that any Aboriginal remains held by a university, museum or other institution were found or came from its community area, the local Aboriginal community may request the Minister to negotiate with the university, museum or institution for the return of the remains to the community. (22).

21Q. (1) Where Aboriginal remains discovered in Victoria are delivered to the Minister, he or she shall:

(a) return the remains to a local Aboriginal community entitled to, and willing to accept, possession, custody, or control of the remains in accordance with Aboriginal tradition. (18).

The museum's decision to return and rebury two pre-historic collections of skeletal materials aroused international controversy at the time and still does. Prominent scientists and academics whose careers attest to a recognition and support for equal rights of indigenous peoples in cultural heritage issues have criticised Victoria's legislation and contend that unconditional repatriation and reburial of ancient skeletal collections represent a major loss not only to universal science but to the furthering of Aboriginal self-knowledge (Mulvaney, 1989, 1991). Alan Thorne believes that the reburial or total destruction of skeletal collections 'commits [Aboriginals] forever to a white interpretation of their pre-history'. He says:

What happens if in 20 years time a black paleoanthropologist ... wants to examine this material? (Stannard, 1988: 44).

Likewise, not all Aboriginals share political activist Michael Mansell's view that 'there is no need to examine human remains' (Stannard, 1988: 44). A recent Koorie Heritage Trust survey of regional Koorie community concerns found support for the general preservation of artefacts and the retention of 'ancient skeletal remains' to be 'available for scientific research ... based on the view that such research may assist mankind in general' (Koorie Heritage Trust, 1990: 8).

Colin Pardoe (South Australian Museum) agrees that the reburial of the Murray Black collection of human remains is 'a great loss'. However, he strongly believes that the



assessment of scientific worth must be placed firmly in the hands of the Aboriginal community. It is they who must "choose between" science and other values (Pardoe, 1991: 21-22).

Pardoe contends that the future of Australian archaeology rests not in conflicting views and radical solutions but in what he terms 'collaborative assessment', a situation where scientists and museums begin to share known information about skeletal collections with Aboriginal communities rather than solely prescribing the uses of skeletal materials and the particular knowledges they have traditionally exposed. Simply put, well-informed decisions that benefit all concerned can be realised by Aboriginal peoples through information sharing.

#### EXHIBITION REVITALISATION FROM INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES

First Peoples' increased participation in museums as museum workers and visitors has resulted in a revitalisation of ethnological collections. Two Australian and Canadian exhibitions, which reclaim and reconstitute historical European material on First Peoples, exemplify recent projects by indigenous curators and historians. *Portraits of Our Elders* and *Fluffs and Feathers* show how historical and stereotypical images of First Peoples can be recontextualised to represent indigenous peoples' experiences. These informative projects alert a broader museum-going public to past injustices, while simultaneously locating First Peoples' contributions within a revised historical narrative.

#### *Reframing History to Erase Stereotypes: A Recovery of Identity.*

Through his knowledge of the sitters, [Michael Aird] has achieved a moving document which gives back to the many previously anonymous subjects, an individual identity which at once defeats past stereotyping and mythical ideas of Aborigines as possessionless nomads. (Bruce, 1993: 27)

*Portraits of Our Elders*, an historical photographic exhibition (and accompanying catalogue), was produced by Aboriginal curator, photographer and historian Michael Aird for the Queensland Museum in 1993. *Portraits of Our Elders* includes photographs from the Queensland Museum, the John Oxley Library, the Anthropology Museum of the University of Queensland, and private collections.

Candice Bruce has observed:

Any discussion about the representation of race in photography would seem inevitably to lead into a critique on the politics of dominance (Bruce, 1993: 27).

This would appear especially to be the case when presenting an exhibition of turn-of-the-cen-



FIG. 5. Studio portrait of Rosie Campbell by Poul C. Poulson, c. 1890s. (Photo courtesy of the Queensland Museum).

tury photographs of unnamed Aborigines posed in the stereotypical studio portraits of J.W. Lindt or the Bain Studio.

Aird's curatorial strategy is to offer 'a glimpse of the transition that Aboriginal people of southern Queensland experienced from the 1860s through to the 1920s' by selecting images that 'demonstrate extremes in situations' (Bruce, 1993). Thus, he looks past stereotypes by juxtaposing studio poses with intimate family portraits, sometimes to shocking effect. A poignant example of Aird's strategy are the contrasting and contradictory images of Rosie Campbell from the 1890s (Figs 5-6). Aird's caption to the family group further removes the distance and anonymity of the first image, as he provides genealogical or historical information on sitters when available, and often the family histories of individuals are related through oral histories from friends and relations. Thus, the text accompanying these two images explains that:



FIG. 6. Family portrait of Rosie Campbell and family taken at Amity Point, May 1891. (Photo courtesy of Bob Anderson — photographer unknown).

Rosie Campbell was just one of the many well-known and respected Aboriginal women from Myora Mission on Stradbroke Island. Many of her grandchildren and their children still live in the region. These people possess many memories of Rosie as well as photographs of her, such as the one above of Rosie with her husband and other members of the Campbell family. (Bruce, 1993: 30)

*Revelations of Past Injustices: Exposing the Myth of the Indian in Popular Culture.*

*Fluffs and Feathers: An Exhibit of Symbols of Indianness* (1988 and 1992), was produced by the Native-run Woodland Cultural Centre in southern Ontario. Mohawk curator and historian Deborah Doxtator draws together a range of symbols of 'Indianness' that have been perpetuated in mass culture over the past century to demonstrate the stereotyping and racism faced by First Nations.

Items exhibited are not the pristine, quality artefacts familiar to museum-goers. Instead, one confronts the popular stereotype of the 'Indian' as evinced in dime store novelties, ashtrays, cheap toys, chewing tobacco packages and tourist

souvenirs. Corporate advertising logos and product names are in abundance, like, *Red Indian Motor Oil* (circa, 1930), *Pontiac, that's the car for me* (General Motors advertising jingle, 1927) and a *Maryland Chief label for chopped collard greens* (circa, 1970). So are posters and photographs of famous Hollywood screen Indians (Linda Darnell in *Buffalo Bill*), comic books, cartoons, and government and tourist posters.

Off-setting this array of mass-market products are displays titled, *The Borrowed Indian: Indians as a Cultural Resource* and *Once Upon a Time: The Role of Indians in History*. The former explores how images of Indians were appropriated, contrived and inscribed within Canadian nationalist agendas. The latter examines historical illustrations of Indians, from fifteenth century renderings of a dignified, classical-looking people to the *Ugly Customers* sketch (a group of Native women shopping) from a 1870 edition of *The Child's History of Canada* school textbook. Interestingly, the catalogue notes that

by far the greatest number of negative images of Indians are found in the history section (Doxlator, 1992: 64).

Visual arts critic, John Bentley Mays, describes the exhibition's impact as, a 'strong and sad ... survey of the most denigrating imagery in popular culture as I have ever seen'. Furthermore, he makes the point that:

When seen in isolation ... an Art Deco table lamp graced with a sexily lurching 'Indian' [hasn't] the power to raise an eyebrow ... [But], the piling up and astute groupings of these images ... reveals the ignorance, the stereotyping, the loathing and encouragement for contempt at work everywhere and at all times, in the mass production of the popular idea of the 'Indian'. (Mays, 1992: 4).

*Fluffs and Feathers* arose from a simple concept: the curators simply gathered together images of Indians created by white people that were at various periods distributed throughout North American mass culture. Collectively, these items forcefully underscore the notion that the reclamation of one's culture, from a First Nations perspective, always requires

struggling with stereotypes — one dimensional prototypes projected by European mythologising (Townsend-Gault, 1992: 90).

For this reason, it is imperative that a greater number of projects like *Portraits of Our Elders* and *Fluffs and Feathers*, gain favour in museum programs. Indigenous curators and historians can provide critical and much-needed revisions of European history that typically ignored, denigrated or misrepresented First Peoples' heritage. These perspectives are essential to First Peoples' reconnection to their own past, but equally, they can alert the dominant society to greater consciousness of inherited prejudices that endure today.

## CASE STUDIES II: INDIGENOUS CULTURAL INITIATIVES

We cannot call our building a museum: that would mean that our culture is dead. It is not dead, only sleeping. (Alfred Douse, High Chief, Kitwancool Band, Gitksan, cited in Edwards & Stewart, 1980: 123).

In the post-colonial era, indigenous peoples who actively pursue cultural restoration within the broader framework of self-determination have come to see the museum as an important resource. Ethnographic collections are being claimed world-wide as aids to indigenous cultural revival. Likewise, the local indigenous cultural centre has been promoted as an alternative to the more centralised, western-style museum.

## HERITAGE AWARENESS: CULTURAL IDENTITY BEGINS AT HOME

Henrietta Fourmile expresses the needs of Australian Aboriginal people to gain access to museum resources in their own communities with an urgency echoed by many First Peoples:

Having large centralised collections of our heritage often thousands of kilometres away from our communities is of no use to us. ... What use is it to me to have my Yidindji and Kunggandji heritage ... down south [Canberra]. I didn't know these things existed until I was thirty years of age. Whole generations of kids are growing up ... without having access to and knowing about fundamental aspects of their birthright. ... While [museums and anthropologists] acquire knowledge about aspects of our heritage, ours fades as our Elders, without access to critical cultural resources necessary for the handing on of knowledge, pass on. Many Aboriginal communities are starved of these vital resources which can enable members to trace family, re-establish links with ancestral lands, and recover cultural knowledge. (Fourmile, 1990: 59-60)

The idea of local cultural centres has been generated by indigenous communities themselves, nation-state governments and cultural heritage professionals. It has arisen from a multitude of social and heritage trends in past decades, and while self-determination and cultural restoration represent an overriding ideological force for First Peoples, they are not singularly responsible for this development. UNESCO has promoted world heritage protection and management (natural and cultural) since the 1950s through a series of Conventions for use at regional and national levels. UNESCO's universal doctrine that 'the cultural heritage of a people' also 'belongs to mankind as a whole' (Makagiansar, 1989: 9) is perhaps at odds with First Peoples' independence movements. Nonetheless, the organisation has encouraged the return of cultural property to communities of origin since the late 1970s (Specht, 1978). In this regard, the social significance of cultural property to the cultural identity of a people has been recognised by UNESCO in terms that are congruent with Henrietta Fourmile's specifically local concerns:

Being the testimony of peoples' creative acts in the course of their history, and being an expression of their cultural soul and collective personality, it is in cultural heritage that cultural identity is rooted. It is cultural identity which provides cohesion to a community and which forms a living core of its total being and becomes the driving force for its future. The assertion of cultural identity is, therefore, inseparable from cultural heritage. As such, no people and no nation can afford to ignore the preservation and nurturing of its cultural heritage lest it risk losing its identity. (Makagiansar, 1989: 9).

World heritage awareness, including repatriation actions by museums, have paralleled developments in cultural tourism, and indigenous

communities have been implicated in this process, initially, as the providers of significant 'national' resources. Indigenous communities see themselves as the potential beneficiaries of a cultural tourism industry that may support local initiatives. In Australia, national heritage and tourism strategies have recognised the importance of Aboriginal heritage to the construction of a 'national' identity since the early 1970s. A recommendation of *The Preservation of Australia's Aboriginal Heritage* seminar in 1972 stated:

There is great potential for Aboriginal monuments, antiquities and sites to be developed by Aborigines as part of Australia's expanding tourist industry, [including] ownership of tourist facilities, enterprises and site museums. Such involvement should generate an intense sense of pride and identity in a people who have suffered emotionally as a result of pressures arising out of values forced upon them by the non-Aboriginal community. (*ibid*: 120)

#### FIRST PEOPLES' CULTURAL CENTRES: ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTS FOR COMMUNITY

This overview illustrates that First Peoples' cultural centres have developed through global heritage consciousness, cultural tourism developments, repatriation actions, and indigenous political and cultural restoration initiatives. However, while governments, institutions and indigenous peoples may articulate shared concerns for cultural heritage protection and restoration, these views are based on disparate ideological positions.

Whereas western societies seek to explore the material evidence of the past in museums, the same cannot be said of indigenous peoples. A principal difference between museums and indigenous cultural centres is the latter's tendency to focus on activities which have immediate relevance to their community rather than on objects and their 'historical' symbolism.

There are numerous reasons for this, a significant one being that until repatriation processes took effect, many indigenous communities did without previous possessions that were vital to their social and spiritual well-being. Linked to historical circumstances of dispossession, is the predominant indigenous view that objects in and of themselves are living only when integrated within and connected to a holistic vision of the world. So, when objects are returned to their communities of origin, they are returned not simply to another 'museum', but are reconstituted into the fullness and complexity of community life. Canadian museum workers who have returned medicine bundles have witnessed the

power inherent in the transformation from museum artefact to spiritual container in Plains Indian religious revival ceremonies (McCormack, 1991; Conaty, 1994).

The indigenous notion of ownership of cultural property (particularly items of a sacred nature) is radically opposed to the museum ideal where collections are held in 'public trust' for the good of a national population. Instead, ownership is grounded in specific religious ceremonies and social and political organisations. Sacred/secret or ceremonial objects, like Aboriginal tjurunga or Plains Indian medicine bundles, are normally held in the care of Elders; individual owners or custodians in positions of authority hold ceremonial rights in these items. Their loss meant that 'some ceremonies simply couldn't be performed without them' and the continuity of patrilineal family connections was disrupted (Anderson, 1990b). The same is true of Canadian Northwest Coast Indian societies where dispossessed potlatch treasures are traceable to particular families (Hoover & Inglis, 1990).

Thus, when cultural centres are established, family associations often become a meaningful aspect of their organisation and development (Cranmer Webster, 1992; Clifford, 1991). So too, do broader community concerns, such as the revival and continuation of traditional skills, ceremonies or languages. Consequently, indigenous cultural centres are often multi-use facilities, incorporating educational functions, community-service needs, and commercial outlets for the sale of local crafts and wares. Whereas many cannot usefully or financially support extended conservation and display efforts required of object-focused museums, they look instead to the cultural needs of their communities.

#### ORIGINS AND EARLY MANIFESTATIONS OF THE CULTURAL CENTRE

The indigenous cultural centre in its various manifestations is difficult to trace historically in a global sense. However, review of papers from the 1978 Adelaide seminar, *Preserving Indigenous Cultures: a new role for museums*, shows that a variety of indigenous museums, resource centres or keeping places had developed from grass-roots initiatives or through a combination of local and government initiatives. Many were operational by the early 1970s.

In Canada, the 'Ksan Historic Indian Village at Hazelton, British Columbia began planning its village-to-be in 1947 through the efforts of a local body, the Skeena Treasure House Association. Its

first building — the Skeena Treasure House — opened in 1957. Five more buildings were added in subsequent years, and the completed Village complex officially opened to the public in 1970 (Edwards & Stewart, 1980). Likewise, an early Australian initiative was the Yuendumu Men's Museum located 180 miles north-west of Alice Springs in the Northern Territory. The idea of establishing a restricted-access Aboriginal keeping place to house sacred Warlpiri objects was first discussed in 1963. Six years later funds for the project were being raised locally and the Men's Museum was officially opened in July 1971 (Edwards, 1972).

The Museum of Philippine Traditional Cultures was established in the early 1970s by a private organisation devoted to ethnic minority affairs and community education. An example of a temporal cultural centre, its sole purpose was to house a reference collection to assist a craft revitalisation program amongst villagers. Within four years, the museum had served its purpose: the craft tradition had been rejuvenated. Thus, the museum was dis-established with the idea that the facility itself could be used to engage the local community in other relevant activities (Baradas, 1980).

The intention of the *Preserving Indigenous Cultures* seminar was to 'tackle some of the problems of cultural survival faced by Aboriginal communities in Australia and by indigenous people in Asia, the Pacific and North America' and to examine 'the role museums could play in preserving their culture' (UNESCO Review, 1981: 14). As the 'Ksan Indian Village and the Yuendumu Museum show, indigenous groups have maintained cultural links with their traditions long before UNESCO and others took a direct interest. Perhaps the major achievement of *Preserving Indigenous Cultures* was its message to the museum community, as even today it is cited by many Australian museum workers as the main catalyst for generating an awareness of and support for indigenous cultural heritage issues.

#### AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT POLICY PROPOSALS: CULTURAL CENTRE FUTURES

Since the Adelaide conference, numerous indigenous cultural centres have been realised in Australia with varying degrees of success. This trend has continued into the present, with discussions on the benefits and necessity of Aboriginal keeping places and museums resurfacing with greater regularity and emphasis in various government reports.

Of note is the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (now the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission) *Draft Departmental Guidelines on the Protection of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage* circulated to the museum community for comment in 1987 (Queensland Museum Archives E84/5). Its policy objectives and strategic goals linked the return of cultural property and Aboriginal control to program strategies and projects that emphasised the development of keeping places, community museums and cultural resource centres.

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs guidelines stressed that 'storage/display facilities for Aboriginal cultural property ideally should be established or developed only at the request of Aboriginals', and 'whatever form ... is adopted, it is to be under Aboriginal control and administration' (2). A commitment to training Aboriginal peoples in museum work and as liaison officers would be supported by government funds and programs. Likewise, State museums were considered integral to the successful implementation of the keeping places policy through repatriation actions, training, and administrative and research support.

While many Australian museums have progressively dealt with restitution issues and have welcomed Aboriginal involvement in cultural heritage affairs since the mid-1980s, proposals raised in the 1987 Department of Aboriginal Affairs *Guidelines on the Protection of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage* are still under review and discussion in the ongoing Australian Aboriginal Affairs Council's (AAAC) Task Force on the Return of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Property. Established in February 1990, and facilitated by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, the aim of the AAAC Task Force is to develop a national policy. To date, however, its series of resolutions on cultural property matters

do not yet constitute a policy, but rather a series of pointers to directions for policy recommendations (ATSIC, 1993: 3, 4).

Despite slow progress at the policy level, the federal government announced in 1993 that it

will develop a national strategy, at a cost of \$400,000 as part of \$1.3 million promised over four years, to return cultural property to indigenous Australians (ACDO, 1993).

This initiative may signal that once again keeping places will gain federal attention in debates about precisely where returned materials will be housed. Regardless of direct government intervention, a recent increase in 'non-traditional'

Aboriginal centres has come to pass. The Brambuk Living Cultural Centre (Budja Budja, Victoria), the Dreamtime Aboriginal Centre (Rockhampton, Queensland) and the Brewarrina Aboriginal Cultural Museum (Brewarrina, New South Wales) are just a few examples of recent enterprises.

Perhaps the main distinction between the western museum and the indigenous cultural centre is the variety and diversity displayed in the latter's formation and utility. The following Australian and Canadian endeavours illustrate how First Peoples are undertaking recent cultural projects at the community level. This small sampling of heritage activities include archaeological sites and cultural centres, rock art sites and keeping places.

#### INDIGENOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND CULTURAL CENTRES

*Brambuk Living Cultural Centre, Budja Budja (Hall's Gap) in Gariwerd (Grampians), Victoria, Australia.* The Brambuk Living Cultural Centre was conceived in 1985 as a cooperative venture between the Brambuk Cooperative (five south-west Victorian Koori communities) and the Victorian Labor cabinet (principally Aboriginal Affairs and Tourism), just one year after the Grampian region was declared a national park. The Cooperative's proposal to build a living Koori cultural centre in the midst of significant rock art sites in the Grampian Ranges was approved immediately. The centre's architect, Gregory Burgess, based the building's winding and curvaceous design and colouring on the surrounding mountains and natural vegetation. Conceptually, after much Koori consultation, it followed

the notion of five circles, in part a homage to the Lake Condah dwellings elsewhere in Victoria's western district, but also representing each of the Koori communities involved (Davidson, 1991: 32).

In 1990, the \$2 million centre won the Zelman Cowen Award for innovative architecture.

Molly Dyer, a long-time Koori activist, sees the centre as

a celebration of Aboriginality, something which should be national in scope, although focused on the Brambuk communities (Davidson, 1991: 34).

Displays focus on early Aboriginal and white conflict under headings like 'Despicable Race', and others chart more recent injustices within living memory, such as mission life and cultural assimilation. Koori relationships to land are explored through plant walks and rock art tours, and permanent audio-visual displays inform visitors

of pre-contact Koori history and the 'material and spiritual culture of the Djabwurrung and Jardwadjali people of the Gariwerd area'. Three-tiered schools programs have been in effect since 1991 (Clark, 1991: 11). The Koori-controlled centre is predominantly staffed by Kooris — managers, tours guides and rangers — with some white representation.

The Brambuk Living Cultural Centre, while focusing on Koori cultural heritage, also functions more broadly as a community cultural centre for the region. Therefore, some activities are inclusive and accepting of cultural diversity. For instance, the first function held in the centre's hall was a Greek wedding. Signage outside the main entrance states Brambuk's objectives as:

A place where both Koori and non-Koori people can come together to share the knowledge of the past and discuss the issues confronting Koori people today ... Together, we can improve the future. (Davidson, 1991: 34)

Tourism is the most significant route for Brambuk to develop long-term maintenance, particularly as its primary source of funding was provided only for its first three years of operation. However, this commercial aspect is very much at odds with Koori aims to reinforce cultural identity through education and stronger community ties.

#### *Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Interpretive Centre, Fort Macleod, Alberta, Canada.*

Inside the museum, looking at the various items depicting the history of the buffalo and the people who hunted them, my attention shifted from the display cases to the people who were tending them. I became aware that the facility was staffed entirely by Indians (Blackfoot ... from a nearby reserve). But I found myself thinking that they didn't look like Indians to me, the Indians I knew from my school books and from the movies, the Indians, in fact, who were depicted inside the museum displays I was looking at. That is where most of us are used to seeing Indians, from the other side of a sheet of glass. But at Head-Smashed-In, they were running the place. They stood around in jeans and dresses and plaid shirts — not feather headdresses and leather moccasins — talking and laughing. If curious visitors like myself asked them something, they answered thoroughly but not pedantically: as if this was something they knew, not something they had studied.

After a long afternoon learning about the buffalo, I left Head-Smashed-In dimly aware that I had changed my mind about something. It had been an encounter not just with an important place in the history of the continent, but also with an idea, my own idea about what an Indian was. If I thought I had known before, I didn't think I knew anymore. (Francis, 1992: 2-3).

The Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Interpretive Centre was built in 1987 on a UNESCO World Heritage Site in southern Alberta: a long,



11 metre high cliff. The significance of the site lies in the unseen archaeological remains buried up to 10 metres deep. These

relate to a saga of the use of this cliff by Plains Indians as a buffalo jump, a sophisticated and elaborate system of stampeding large herds of buffalo to their deaths, as far back as 6,000 years ago. Head-Smashed-In, according to Peigan legend, is named for a young boy who fell victim to his own curiosity. Hiding in the shelter of a cliff ledge, to get a more exciting view of the buffalo falling to their death, he was trapped against the cliff wall by the pile of bodies. He was found later with his skull crushed and the Jump was named "Itsipa'ksikihkinihkootsiyapo'pi" (where he got his head smashed in). (Sponholz, 1988: 8)

Head-Smashed-In is one of the oldest and best-preserved buffalo jump sites in North America. The Interpretive Centre is governed by the provincial government's Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism and Historic Sites departments. However, the involvement of Blackfoot Nations (Peigan, Blood and Blackfoot bands) has been essential to successive phases of the Centre's development (Brink, 1992).

Tribal Elders have been consulted on centre themes and the selection of artefacts and texts for exhibitions. Medicine bundle (ceremonial objects) displays require the presence of Elders for installation, removal and regular cleansing ceremonies. Likewise, purification ceremonies are periodically conducted to bless the Jump and Interpretive Centre staff. Over half the employees of the centre are Native, and one of the qualifications for a tour guide is that they speak Blackfoot. The centre has established innovative training programs for youth from nearby reserves, and has thus become an important source of employment and cultural education for Native peoples in southern Alberta.

Overall, the Centre's building and exhibitions retain the features of the modern museum. While the \$9.8 million facility is built into the hillside to respect the natural surround, its material impression of multi-levelled concrete cubes and internal glass walls is distinctly modernist. Similarly, the exhibitions resemble those of ethnographic museums with objects in glass cases, photographic and text panels, dioramas, free-standing buffalo, and a series of audio-visual presentations. However, as the Centre focuses specifically on the history and culture of the Plains Indians, particularly the buffalo hunt, and most of the attendants are Native, the prominence of traditional presentational forms is lessened the longer one attends to the displays. Significantly, one soon discovers that the exhibitions simply elucidate and anticipate the key element in the

Centre's success: the buffalo jump itself. Visitors move outdoors onto trails that lead to the bottom of the cliff and to the jump point. This natural spectacle links the visitor's indoor experience to an environmental context.

#### CULTURAL REVITALISATION: ROCK ART SITES

*Ngarinyin Rock Art Restoration Project, Central Kimberley Plateau, Western Australia.* The Wanang Ngari Cultural Corporation in Derby initiated a cultural continuity project for young people in 1986. The rock art restoration project took place at caves located some 310 kilometres west of Derby. Its objective and proposed community benefits were:

To enable traditional Aboriginal people to protect and conserve Wandjina paintings and sites of significance with a view to train young Aboriginal people to continue this process forever. ... This project will help in re-establishing ties with areas of country and will rejuvenate ritual and ceremonial practices for Ngarinyin people. (Mowljarlai & Peck, 1987: 71).

The project functioned jointly as a program for cultural revitalisation and youth employment: it was funded by a \$110,000 Commonwealth (Community Employment Program) grant. Twelve young people under 30 years of age were employed to work alongside elders to record and restore sites located in Ngarinyin country in the central Kimberley Plateau, Western Australia. Oral histories, as told by elders and pertinent to the sites, were documented on tape, selected sites were re-painted using traditional methods under the tutelage of elders and their families, and other sites were conserved (cleaned and maintained) and protected (fenced and signed) using non-Aboriginal methods.

Prior to beginning the project, the Wanang Ngari Cultural Corporation held a meeting to establish project parameters. They would only re-paint sites that were faded and needed painting, photographs were to be taken of each site before re-painting, and an elder was to be present during each restoration to tell the young people the story about the place and demonstrate how to paint in traditional ways. Importantly, the custodians of each site were consulted, and they agreed that the re-painting should be done. David Mowljarlai and Cyril Peck explain the currency of the project for the Ngarinyin people:

Our language, our ways, our stories and our art must be shared and given to the next generation — this is how it has always been. It is not just nice to re-paint the sites, it's got to be done. You see Wandjinas have power and we must look after them so the power is used properly. Some white people who worked with us early on told the world about our art a long time ago. They knew that re-painting was done again and

again. They saw art being repainted in some places. In other places they saw art left to fade because those people had passed away. We will make sure this does not happen to the sites whose names and stories we still know. (Mowljarlai & Peck, 1987: 71)

By 1987, eight sites had been re-painted and twelve young people experienced Ngarinyin culture through the teachings of the elders. However, the restoration of Aboriginal rock art has not been without controversy (Michaels, 1988). Re-painting is often viewed as an elimination of a past record, in this case, the destruction of a testament to a 'universal' prehistory. Thus, the restoration and/or re-painting of rock art sites in Australia by local Aboriginal groups has been severely criticised by some archaeologists, conservationists and others, who, in the interests of science, world heritage and cultural tourism, would propose other means of dealing with the problems of deterioration of rock art sites. In the Ngarinyin project, Mowljarlai & Peck experienced such opposition when:

A station owner interested in tourism to rock art sites had this project stopped before we were finished. He said that we used house paint, wrote our names, painted cartoon animals and behaved in the wrong way. There is little or no truth in his complaints. Of course in a new project we are learning and some things could have been done better, but the Ngarinyin people did a good job.

Cultural restoration and revival projects require negotiation and compromise between Aboriginal communities and non-Aboriginal cultural industry workers. The Ngarinyin project demonstrates the needs of the community to educate youth in cultural traditions of which rock art re-painting is only one aspect. Here, Ngarinyin peoples' needs took precedent over those of outsiders, be they scientists or potential tourists seeking evidence of a 'past' culture.

#### ABORIGINAL KEEPING PLACE: RESTRICTING ACCESS

##### *Yuendumu Men's and Women's Museums, Northern Territory, Australia.*

"MEN ONLY, WATIMIPA." — signage Yuendumu Museum (Michaels, 1987: 29).

The Yuendumu Men's and Women's Museums were established to preserve the cultural traditions of eight skin groups (or clans) of the Warlpiri peoples. Opened in 1971, the Men's Museum was the first Aboriginal keeping place in Australia to hold secret/sacred objects and paintings which had traditionally been hidden out bush. Many elders were skeptical of the notion of a 'museum' when the idea was first proposed in 1963. Others believed that a centralised storage area would ensure non-interference with sacred

sites scattered around Yuendumu, and hoped a museum would strengthen the traditional culture, particularly for the young people.

The [Men's] museum, it was thought, would have the role of a school. It would be a centrally located place where young men could be tutored in tribal matters. (Edwards, 1972: 55).

Funds for the museum were raised by settlement staff and the community, while other contributions came from the Aboriginal Benefits Trust Fund, a fund that distributes mining royalties paid by large companies operating on tribal lands. Secret/sacred items moved into storage included tjurungas and bull roarers. Elders of each skin group painted sacred paintings on the internal walls and the earthen floor of the keeping place. Access to the Men's Museum is denied to Warlpiri women and uninitiated men. Adult European men and Aboriginals of other tribes known to the Warlpiri are sometimes allowed to enter, along with European women over 40 years of age under certain conditions.

In the intervening decades, the Yuendumu Museums have experienced a transformation that reflects a range of immediate local circumstances common to any community, including social disturbances and lack of resources. Early on, the museums were vandalised by local youth. As a result, a number of secret/sacred objects were stolen, and subsequently lost or sold to passing tourists. Security measures at the museums were not adequate (or not in keeping with local custom) to maintain continual surveillance for protection of the premises and items housed. Individual custodians began to remove items from the museum by the early to mid-eighties. Many were sent by elders to the South Australian Museum for safekeeping and temporary custodianship. Other items were taken out bush to traditional keeping places where they remain today.

In western understanding, the so-called, 'troubled' history of the Yuendumu Museums does not constitute a successful enterprise in preserving and conserving cultural heritage. In Yuendumu, despite the museums' fluctuating circumstances, Warlpiri consistently link present cultural expression with traditional practice in many ways. Yuendumu is a community rich in artists who have marketed and exhibited their art widely and have therefore extended aspects of their cultural expression far beyond the community.

In April 1985, locally produced, daily television transmissions began from the studios of the Warlpiri Media Association. Local material — interviews with elders, community an-



FIG. 7. Painting on the school doors, Yuendumu. From 'After 200 years: Photographic Essays of Aboriginal and Islander Australia Today', Penny Taylor (ed.). (Photo courtesy of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies).

nouncements and meetings, story-telling, and documentaries of ceremonies (such as the Fire Ceremony) — has been produced in Yuendumu since 1982. The first videotape the community directed was an afternoon of casual dancing held at the Women's Museum (Michaels, 1987).

Another important development in Yuendumu is the Warlukurlangu Artists group formed initially in 1983 when a number of Warlpiri women began to decorate canvas boards with traditional designs. Several senior men proposed to paint the Yuendumu school doors with Dreaming designs to pass on their knowledge to the young people in 1984, and since then, the art movement has escalated (Fig. 7). Many Warlukurlangu artists have had their work purchased by major public galleries and private collections (Lennard, 1990). In 1989, Francis Jupurrurla Kelly (largely responsible for the independent television initiative at Yuendumu) and six Warlpiri male artists contributed a large-scale ground painting to the 'Magiciens de la Terre' contemporary art exhibition held at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (McKenzie, 1990).

## CONCLUSION

First Peoples' understanding and articulation of cultural heritage matters involves, but is not solely restricted, to museum locales. Cultural heritage, in a climate of indigenous political assertion and cultural rejuvenation, is much more than objects in buildings. It encompasses a revitalisation of family relationships, languages, religion, connections to land, and economic, social and political reorganisation. The museum's return of cultural property to a community of origin is as important as official recognition of traditional forms of Aboriginal medicine or customary law.

However, moral recognition of First Peoples' cultural rights is not enough. First Peoples' want governmental policy and legislative reforms. These are imperative to ensure that First Peoples' rights as citizens with distinct sociocultural needs will be appreciated and respected by the dominant citizenry: descendants of settler societies and recent migrant groups.

The museum can play a key role in aiding First Peoples' broader aspirations for self-determination. They are storehouses of knowledge; knowledge that can assist First Peoples in establishing links to a fractured past. In this respect, the museum's rectification of historical misrepresentations can do much to unhinge stereotypical public perceptions of First Peoples. Likewise, the restoration of cultural property can support the revival of religious or social ceremony, and re-establish family and community relations. The empowerment of First Peoples as the speakers for their heritage in its diversified forms and contexts is essential. First Peoples' wish to control their heritage is a complex and layered issue, one with which museums and First Peoples are still grappling. However, First Peoples' claim to own and manage their cultural heritage is a challenge museums must openly face in order to achieve substantial and genuine intellectual, structural and policy reforms.

#### GUIDE TO KEY SOURCES

AIRD, Michael, 1993. 'Portraits of Our Elders'. This recent Australian museum exhibition and catalogue illustrate how ethnographic collections may be revitalised by Aboriginal interpretation. 'Portraits of Our Elders' is simultaneously a historical survey of Aboriginal studio portraits from the 1860s to the 1920s, and a family album of sorts. Early portraits show how European settlers viewed the Aborigine, but Aird contrasts these stereotypical depictions with family portraits to indicate how Aborigines perceived themselves.

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF MUSEUMS, 1991. 'Museums and Native Americans renegotiating the contract'.

This issue of the professional association's journal includes seven articles on museum initiatives in policy and programming that take into account the rights of Native Americans. Topics addressed include: the Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act, its impact on museums and significance for Native Americans; an Arizona funding program to assist tribal museums with repatriation processes; future plans for the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian; the repatriation policy of Chicago's Field Museum; and case examples of collaborative museum projects throughout the United States.

AMES, Michael, 1990. Cultural empowerment and museums; opening up anthropology through collaboration. Ames considers how museums might respond to First Nations cultural and political interests through a clearer understanding of cultural difference. His salient point is that First Nations and museums hold fundamentally distinctive cultural and political concepts: First Nations possess a holistic worldview, whereas museum traditions favour classificatory systems of interpretation.

ANDERSON, Chris, 1990a. Australian Aborigines and museums — A new relationship. This article encapsulates Anderson's published writings since the mid-1980s about the necessity for Australian museums to establish new relations with First Peoples. He provides an overview of Aboriginal perceptions of the museum, including an important discussion of the conflicting pressures brought to bear on many communities because of a renewed interest in Aboriginal culture by museums and tourism. The ways in which Australian museums have generally responded to repatriation claims and increasing demands for Aboriginal involvement are summarised with focus on the South Australian Museum.

CANADIAN MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION, 1988. 'Museums and First Nations'. This special issue of the association's professional journal includes both Native and Non-Native perspectives. Museum professionals address three main themes: the erasure of stereotypes in museums and popular culture; the repatriation of collections to Native-run cultural centres; the relevant institutional context for presenting contemporary Indian art. Canadian proposals for indigenous museum policies are discussed, as is the impact of First Nations' politics on museums. Profiles of indigenous cultural centres, and reviews of Native exhibitions and books are featured.

CANADIAN MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION and the ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS, 1992. 'Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships Between Museums and First Peoples'. Recommendations for equal working partnerships between museums and First Nations were developed through nation-wide consultations with Native and non-Native museum workers. As such, the report emphasises the common and shared interests of First Peoples and museums. It promotes a commitment to mutual recognition and respect for both worldviews, and advocates the principle of shared management responsibilities through liberal approaches to repatriation, access, training and interpretation.

CLIFFORD, James, 1991. *Four Northwest Coast Museums: travel reflections*. Clifford's travelogue offers 'personal impressions of the locales, buildings, and styles of exhibition' of the U'mista Cultural Centre, Alert Bay, the Kwagwalth Museum and Cultural Centre, Cape Mudge (Native-run cultural centres), the Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, and the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver. The text reflects on how institutional frameworks (tribal or western museum) or interpretative contexts (aesthetic or ethnological) influence the visitor's reading of cultural materials.

COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION, 1993. 'Previous Possessions, New Obligations'. The CAMA policy is based on the principle that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have 'inherent interests' in the 'care and control, spiritual and practical, of their cultural property'. Noting that museums are legally bound to hold Australian indigenous collections, the report, nonetheless, ethically supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights to self-determination in respect of cultural heritage matters. Therefore, the policy encourages museums nation-wide to recognise indigenous rights by setting policies and developing programs to improve current and future relations between museums and Australia's First Peoples.

DOXTATOR, Deborah, 1992. 'Fluffs & Feathers: An Exhibit on the Symbols of Indianness'. The catalogue for the exhibition 'Fluffs and Feathers' is a valuable resource guide for how the First Nations of Canada have been imagined by Europeans since first contact. It examines 'symbols of Indianness' in popular culture (tourism, cinema, advertising), history (academy and government), and museum (art and anthropology) contexts. A revisionist history project by a Native curator and Native historian, 'Fluffs and Feathers' bluntly exposes the severity and persistence of prejudice and racism experienced by First Nations into the present through the visual projections of the dominant Euro-Canadian culture.

FOURMILE, Henrietta, 1990. *Possession is nine-tenths of the law — and don't Aboriginal people know it!* Fourmile examines varying concepts of ownership in relation to collections of Aboriginal cultural property held in public museums. From an Aboriginal perspective, she reviews the colonial bias of museums and its ongoing manifestation in the concept of Crown

ownership which legally refuses Aboriginal claims of moral ownership. She identifies the key players in Aboriginal cultural property and heritage ownership struggles — curators and anthropologists in museums, government ministers, elders and communities — and examines the ownership arguments of each group — scientific, legal and moral. Fourmile challenges governments and museums to de-colonise by recognising Aboriginal moral rights through legislative reform and repatriation.

HILL, Rick, 1988. *Sacred trust: cultural obligation of museums to Native People*. Hill offers a Native viewpoint on the ethical responsibilities of Canadian museums to take seriously Native cultural heritage concerns, in both legal and moral ways. The historical roots and prevalent ethnocentrism of a white-dominated museum profession are noted as a major hurdle in erasing stereotypical perceptions that detract from the self-determination efforts of First Nations. Hill examines the politics of collecting Native materials, noting that human rights, religious rights and aboriginal rights have been considered in collection activities only recently.

HILL, Rick, 1992. *One part per million: white appropriation and Native voices*. Hill addresses the appropriation of Native images and culture by non-Native artists. He believes appropriation practices ideologically share much with early colonial attitudes of disrespect and misunderstanding of a different culture. Non-Native artists using Native imagery reinforce homogeneous stereotypes, and disempower Native artists of their particular cultural voices, visions, identities and moral rights.

HINSLEY Jr, Curtis, 1981. 'Savages and Scientists: The Smithsonian Institution and the Development of American Anthropology 1846-1910'. Hinsley traces the development of anthropology from the founding of the Smithsonian Institution in 1846 to the decline of the federal Bureau of American Ethnology at the turn-of-the-century. An insightful combination of institutional, biographical and intellectual history, Hinsley examines anthropology's institutional progress from an ill-defined to a scientific discipline. The ideas, morals and endeavours of influential figures in the field, such as John Wesley Powell, Otis Mason, and Franz Boas, are set against the religious, intellectual and political concerns of their day.

INGLIS, Richard & ABBOTT, Donald 1991. *A tradition of partnership: The Royal British Columbia & First Peoples Museum*. This

museum has been developing a mutually beneficial working relationship with the First Peoples of British Columbia for decades. Inglis and Abbott address the question of how a Western museum begins to include other voices, and provide a history of their institution's partnerships with First Peoples. A series of recent examples of collaborative projects, from repatriation and archaeological projects to exhibitions and festivals, are highlighted.

McMASTER, Gerald & MARTIN, Lee-Ann (eds), 1992. 'Indigena: Contemporary Native Perspectives'. 'Indigena', a contemporary First Nations art exhibition organised by the Canadian Museum of Civilization, was produced by a team of Native curators, artists and writers as a critical response to the 'celebration' of Columbus' founding of the Americas. Colonisation of the Arctic; the significance of repatriation for Native communities; and a Native perspective on the discovery of America are some of the topics covered by Native historians, anthropologists, filmmakers, authors and artists.

MICHAELS, Eric, 1987. 'Towards a Cultural Future: Francis Jupurrurla Makes TV at Yuendumu'. Michaels discusses his involvement in an independent and interventionist television project at Yuendumu in the Northern Territory during the mid-1980s. Community-produced videotapes documented various local events: ceremonies and dances, public meetings, storytelling. This culturally-specific and community-based television project indicates a potential challenge to western conceptions of media production and use. However, Michaels poses realistic questions about the survival possibilities of interventionist, indigenous production within government and corporate-controlled communications systems.

MULVANEY, D.J. 1991. Past regained, future lost: the Kow Swamp Pleistocene burials. Mulvaney criticises legislative instruments which required the Museum of Victoria to return for reburial prehistoric skeletal materials in recent years: the Kow Swamp and Murray Black collections. While acknowledging the importance of Aboriginal rights to self-knowledge, Mulvaney argues that the significance of global knowledge may be equally as great. The essay reviews the arguments for and against reburial, particularly in the case of prehistoric materials, and considers the meaning of repatriation exercises in the current climate of Aboriginal self-determinism.

PARDOE, Colin, 1991. Eye of the storm. Pardoe states that the future of Australian archaeol-

ogy is one of Aboriginal ownership, and professionals working collaboratively with Aboriginal communities since the mid-1980s are supportive of such developments. He criticises the media's role in perpetuating a stereotype of controversy around the skeletal remains issue, one that places indigenous peoples and archaeologists in extremist camps of religion and science.

SNOW, Elizabeth, 1993. Archaeology policy development in Canada: a case study in cultural policy. Snow reviews the proposed 'Archaeological Act respecting the protection of the archaeological heritage of Canada 1990'. Snow provides a summary account of the history, rationale, and process of developing the draft legislation. The Proposed Act's assertion of Crown ownership of archaeological resources and its failure to clearly address Aboriginal ownership of these resources is cited as a key reason for its demise.

SPECHT, Jim, 1979. Anthropology. Anthropology and archaeology within Australia's first State museum are traced through a discussion of the intellectual orientation, collecting practices and fieldwork enterprises of the museum's curators and administrators over almost two centuries. This informative overview details how museums approached indigenous collections research, management and exhibitions, and the roles curators and administrators played in early public education and legislative reform, despite often sporadic financial infrastructures and minimal public support for Aboriginal collections and studies until more recent decades.

SPECHT, Jim, 1993. Museums and cultural heritage of the Pacific Islands. Specht reviews indigenous self-assertion movements, with respect to museums and cultural heritage issues, in the Pacific region where the first decolonisation came in 1962. In the past 25 years, organisations such as UNESCO and the Australian government have increasingly supported, in principle, the inherent rights of First Peoples to own, manage and determine the future of their cultural heritage. Specht measures theoretical proposals and actions taken during this period against the practical problems of achieving the desired results, and proposes that a re-evaluation of approaches and cooperative effort is needed.

TYMCHUK, Michael, 1985. Museums, anthropology and skeletal remains. An early, but still relevant, essay on the disinterment, use and retention, and repatriation of indigenous skeletal remains by museums and anthropologists. Tymchuk outlines the conflicting views of Native



Americans (cultural needs of a community) and museums and scientists (universal knowledge), arguing that sincere negotiations and moderate opinions can best satisfy the needs of both groups.

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## CHAPTER 5

### MUSEUMS: ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

ROBIN TROTTER

#### INTRODUCTION

The foregoing chapters have focused on the relationship between museums and communities or segments of the population. This chapter turns to a more general aspect of the relations between museums and their communities in considering questions of access and participation. These concerns have become a topic of debate since the 1960s at all levels inside and outside museums. The main factors prompting this have been the increasing importance of localism in museum affairs, increasing demands for public accountability in the administration of museums and a broadening of the notion of cultural heritage.

#### LOCALISM

A powerful impact on museums has been the concept of community empowerment and community-centred approaches to culture, power, and citizenship rights. In the last decade we have seen a re-emergence of concerns about localism, regionalism and particularism; concerns that are closely linked to questions about multiculturalism and communitarianism. It is a trend that often runs counter to increasing nationalism and the growing globalisation of economic relationships (Galla, 1993). In a polemic for local arts, Michael Bogle appealed for greater attention to regional strategies, which would, he argues, result in a decentralisation and de-specialisation of collecting policies, encourage greater community participation, and restore a sense of community (1988: 80). Bogle draws on Lewis Mumford's theory of regionalism in which regionalism is defined as 'the adoption of goals that benefit, support or reinforce regional values' (Mumford, 1938). He goes on to argue that when there is a strong sense of national identity, as there is in Australia, regionalism is not a political threat. Rather, he suggests, it 'can push through national uniformities and assume great importance. Although largely unarticulated, regional differences in Australia are often perceived by the public to be of great interest'. He suggests there are two forms of regionalism — 'geographic regionalism' based on political boundaries of administration and 'cultural regionalism' based on

the revival of vernacular language, literature, and a sense of common identities and values. He envisages the role of museums primarily in terms of cultural regionalism:

Galleries should be at the centre of cultural regionalism because they can provide the focus for 'cultural memory', thus ensuring that each local generation has the opportunity to investigate and reassess its artistic past. ... The community roles of regional galleries have largely imparted national values in the arts and crafts and provided venues for travelling exhibitions. The result is that the preservation, investigation and dissemination of regional values have been neglected. Yet this is where Australia's cultural needs are greatest. If regionalism were adopted, it would involve the complete arts and crafts community and this emphasis would encourage the 'arts ecology' so vital to regional success. (Bogle, 1988: 72-80).

Although Bogle is speaking specifically of arts activities, his comments apply equally to artefact collections held by community museums and the historical work undertaken by these and similar organisations.

#### PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

Alongside new demands from diverse communities for access and participation in cultural activities there are increasing governmental demands for greater public accountability in the administration of museums. As museum visitation numbers grow, museums promote themselves more extensively and operating costs increase, questions of control, and accountability, become public and political issues. Previous government policies of maintaining such institutions 'at arms length' are being challenged.

In this context, the Department of Finance Discussion Paper, *What Price Heritage?*, demonstrated this shift toward a more interventionist role for government in the cultural arena. The discussion revolved around the concept of a 'public-private' benefits model, where 'public-good benefits' were defined as those 'which accrue to the population generally whether or not individuals participate first-hand as consumers of heritage activity and enjoyment of which cannot be restricted to specific groups', and where 'private-good benefits' were described as those 'enjoyed more or less exclusively' which can be 'assigned to specific individuals or groups and which in some form or other can be marketed' (Department of Finance, 1989: 26, 27). The dis-

cussion paper also noted that its brief was to examine 'the degree to which private benefits have been disguised as public benefits and hence the degree to which public moneys have unnecessarily subsidised direct beneficiaries of institutions and their programs' (Department of Finance, 1989: 28).

Subsequent criticisms, such as *What Value Heritage?* (1990), the reply from the Department of the Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories, have read the Department of Finance paper as an exercise in economic rationalism. However, it can also be interpreted as expressing a concern that museums provide improved services for wider categories of citizens rather than serving elite interests, or at least to ensure that the latter are not subsidised by the former. In the same vein, the recent review of the Queensland Museum (the latest in a round of State government reviews of museum activities in the respective States) was framed around concepts of accountability and access.

## CULTURAL HERITAGE

The last decades have seen a widening concept of cultural heritage to incorporate landscapes, streetscapes, heritage areas, photographs and intangible aspects of culture including oral histories and personal memories. The result is a more holistic approach to culture that takes in whole ways of life, whole ecosystems, and whole communities. As a consequence new historical spaces are being defined and marketed; and an expanded range of objects is being re-evaluated as 'valued' artefacts. Activities that had been private and limited in audience, deemed irrelevant, outdated, marginal or becoming extinct, are being rejuvenated, opened up and celebrated.

Museums are adopting strategies to meet these challenges by extending their collecting activities to cover more recent histories, collecting in new areas (photographs, recordings, etc), re-evaluating existing collections and gap-filling with new symbols of national or regional significance. At the same time museums are introducing new activities into their spaces. Performances, demonstrations of craft workers and participatory workshops are increasingly incorporated into museum programs. Museums are also increasingly inviting new participants and different audiences into their exhibitions and, as will be shown in later sections, many now allow and even encourage community groups varying degrees of participation in decision-making.

## COMMUNITY ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

Ivan Karp in 'Museums and Communities' (1992) noted that:

Museums often justify their existence on the grounds that they play a major role in expressing, understanding, developing and preserving the objects, values and knowledge that civil society values and on which it depends. Arguments about the social significance of museums assert that museums can provide services that other institutions cannot. As repositories of knowledge, value, and taste, museums educate, refine, or produce social commitments beyond those that can be produced in ordinary educational and civic institutions. (Karp, 1992: 5).

Karp also establishes a distinction between 'audience' and 'community'. The former he defines as a passive unit which only becomes a community, or active agent, when the unit or group starts to speak for itself and articulates a point of view which then impinges on museum practices. Consequently, an active citizenry may represent a

changing mosaic of communities which seek to influence and control how museums act, what they examine, what they represent, and how they represent it (Karp, 1992: 14).

Using Karp's distinction, it is proposed that what many museums are experiencing today is a shift from a passive, and mostly singular audience, to a 'mosaic of communities'. This shift emerges from the socio-economic and political changes identified in earlier chapters. It is also a product of an emergent museology questioning audiences about their beliefs, opinions and desires and museums about their purpose or role in respect to their societies.

## ACCESS

Museums in general are not doing enough to liberate their collections from the over-loving grip of their special interest audiences. (Thomas, 1993: 7).

'Access' has become a key word in museum debates since the mid-1980s. In Australia this has been demonstrated at recent CAMA conferences as well as by the initiation of various programs and debates that have taken access as their central organising theme.

'Access' can have many meanings. It can refer to physical facilities, (buildings and objects); access for the disabled; financial access; whether or not entrance fees should be charged or to intellectual access which Des Griffin has described as 'access to meaning' (Griffin, 1991). So, access can refer to access to ideas, to education, to fun, to collections, to different interpretations, to cultural and emotional access as well as access to



services. Anne Skates has argued that both historical and current practices within museums may restrict access. Whereas, in the past, museums reflected the interests and pursuits of elites, contemporary museum practices not only continue these traditions but are deeply embedded in the traditions of academic disciplines which, in turn, are products of a westernised scientific positivism.

By excluding, ignoring or peripheralizing it is easy for us to be seen as sexist, classist or racist about other peoples' knowledge. We need an approach that reflects the experiences of most of the community. We need other icons, other definitions and we need to think about other methodologies, theoretical frameworks and interpretations so that museums reflect the diversity of our community, and the historically precluded have access to what we say and contribute to how we say it. (Skates, 1991: 114).

Questions about access also include: who should have access? And to what? How can access be evaluated? Should access be balanced against other museum obligations? And, because access does not necessarily mean participation — that is, effective involvement in museums affairs — what balance should be maintained between external community participation and institutional control?

Too frequently the phrase 'access and participation' is glossed to imply the same thing. However, 'access' means to approach or gain admittance to, and 'participation' means to take part in or share in an activity or enterprise. The discussion paper prepared by DASET, *The Role of the Commonwealth in Australia's Cultural Development* (1992), in discussing 'Access and Participation' notes that:

The development of our culture depends on the involvement of Australians in cultural activities, as creators, audiences, participants and consumers. (1992: 7)

It goes on to discuss: access to cultural experiences, dissemination of the products of artistic expression, widening of audiences, more hands-on interactive displays, and ways of breaking the 'tyranny of distance' with outreach programs, touring exhibitions and increased facilities. The conclusion '... Finding a way to give consumers a bigger say needs to be seen as a priority of the 1990s' (1992: 13), typifies this rhetorical glossing that equates access with participation, subsumes audiences as consumers, and ignores questions about the ownership of cultural institutions and control of cultural production.

Arnstein's 'Ladder of Citizen Participation' (Arnstein, 1969), provides a useful evaluative framework that can help identify more clearly whether museums are limiting or promoting access and/or participation. The model is based on eight 'rungs' that measure the degree of com-

munity participation ranging from non-participatory and management-centred agendas that merely allow citizens to apply a 'rubber stamp' to projects, through to full citizen control. Intermediate 'rungs' cover increasing levels of involvement. A secondary level involves citizens in a therapeutic relationship wherein power holders educate or 'cure' citizens; the 'informing' level sees participation as informing citizens of their rights, responsibilities and options and a fourth level brings citizens in for consultation but on a tokenistic basis. At the next level advice may be received by institutions, but here it is more as a form of placation. Greater involvement through partnerships is evident at level six, although power is redistributed through trade-offs and negotiation. Level seven allows citizens even more power through delegation with management power delegated for selected parts or all parts of programs.

Greg Marginson has adapted Arnstein's ladder of participation to provide an appropriate model whereby communities and museums can examine whether access to museums is 'genuine in intent or outcome, and if not why not' (Table 1). This model can also be used by museums to develop strategies for improved access, and assumes that access goes beyond the community providing an 'audience'. Rather, it posits community access as meaning that the community becomes 'part of the creative process of museums themselves'. While Marginson's ladder might be useful as a means for goal-setting, it is notably evasive regarding the definition of community. Since communities are, by their very nature, plural and diverse, museums may secure the participation of one community at the expense of another. How far participatory ladders of this kind Marginson proposes are able to meet the requirement of mediating and balancing the interest of different and perhaps even conflicting communities is a moot point.

Marginson concludes that, although museums are increasingly laying claim to providing improved access, 'few would actively involve communities in actual exhibition development and very few (for example the SA Migration Museum and the Speakers Corner at Old Parliament House, S.A.), allow communities to have control over exhibition development' (Marginson, 1993: 10).

#### NEW ROLES AND FUNCTIONS FOR MUSEUMS

The museum profession is anxiously and urgently seeking a renewal of the museum as a necessary instrument of service to society. To serve a global heritage for global development. To serve man in his totality, em-

TABLE 1. Marginson's model of access and participation. (Source: Marginson, 1993).

Rungs On The Ladder Of Citizen Participation	General Policy Process	Exhibition Development	Collection Management
1. Public Relations	No participation by community. Key community leaders accessed only for promotion. May be manipulated.	Promotional purposes only.	Promotion only
2. Information Dissemination	Community accessed for promotional purposes and information on museum directions.	Community networks tapped for exhibition promotion, education programs etc., targeted to groups in community.	Community made aware of collections for exhibition and promotional purposes only. Community collectors may be accessed.
3. Information Collection	Community source of information to develop policy. Policy clearly 'of the museum' type.	Community access to develop content only according to curatorial precepts.	Community accessed for collection material only.
4. Interaction/ Discussion	Community formally consulted with, joint project development. Suggestions welcomed and may be acted upon.	Seminars, group interviews, research and collections from within community and implemented by expert.	Community is source of collection, key members used to acquire material held within museums.
5. Share In Decision Making	Policy formulation made without structure, might be unwritten. Decisions are prerogative of key people.	Exhibition devised and developed by key people. Wider group as helpers.	Management by key people. Notion of 'expert' asserted. Collection definitely within museum.
6. Partnership	Museum and community meet regularly. Decisions formally recorded and mutually binding. Decisions are democratically reached.	Exhibitions are joint undertakings and outcomes are mutually shared.	Collection jointly owned and managed. Decision concerning acquisition and disposal made democratically. Collection within museum.
7. Delegated Control	Power to organise and make firm decisions delegated to community. Decisions are binding but higher authority has veto which is not exercised without due process.	Exhibition programs devised and implemented by community. Higher authority has veto/censorship.	Collection managed by community. Higher authority has veto. Collection likely to be within museum.
8. Community Control	Power to organise and make decisions with the community. Decisions are binding. Community has power to raise funds and manage resources.	Exhibition devised, designed and implemented by community without external control.	Control with community over acquisition and disposal. Collection could be held by individual community.

bedded in nature in its totality, yesterday and today, seeking above all his future and the intellectual and material means to master it. (de Varine 1985: 185).

The impact of structural change, the emergence of new social classes and different audiences, competition from other leisure activities, new forms of knowledge and communications technologies, as well as pressures for accountability and access, are causing museums to re-evaluate their educational, social and institutional roles.

*In the Marketplace or in the Community?* Increasing access would seem to require increasing visitor numbers. However, to measure access simply in terms of visitor numbers is perceived by some critics and commentators as problematic. For Elspeth King 'the false pursuit of accessibility' is a product of the economic

convergence of museums, the heritage industry and tourism. She claims museums have become

profit making, pleasure-giving enterprises rather than the traditional centre for collecting, conservation, research and interpretation of the things which a particular society or community values (King 1991: 126).

The issue this poses, therefore, is that of Market or Mission.

The Museums Journal (February, 1990), devoted a special feature to this concern under the heading 'Museums: In the Marketplace or in the Community?' and asked leading museum people in Britain for their assessment. The responses reveal a division of opinion with some arguing for a return to traditional museum values and priorities and others claiming that museums must concede to 'irresistible demand forces'. Andrew

West considers that the controlling elements of most museums are increasingly to be found within the business community, and that museums are increasingly being linked to the 'community of business, of suburbia or the 'gentle-ised' inner city'. Within such a climate there is an emphasis on 'popularity' over genuine 'access', a silencing of scholarship, and a downplaying of the need for the traditional museum work of 'recording, preservation, display and interpretation'. Without a re-affirmation of museum purpose in terms of spiritual and educational needs, West warns, museums will become 'variations of antique shops and auction houses' (West, 1990: 24-26). Similarly, Val Bott refers to a UK survey of museums that confirmed museum visitors are predominantly from the wealthier classes. She stresses the need to make museums both accessible and accountable and to put the relationship between museums and their public ahead of commercial considerations (Bott, 1990: 28-30). According to Victor Middleton, however, the ideal of public service is mythical in that 'nine museums out of ten do not serve the general public in any overall sense at all; they serve the better educated middle class and have little or no appeal to the lower-socio-economic groups'. In contrast, Middleton advocates a 'visitor-oriented approach' and creation of 'exciting, stimulating displays in which the stories of objects are communicated most effectively to the general public in a welcoming atmosphere'. The traditional 'object-oriented ethos' he suggests, may lead to

self indulgent pursuit of personal, intellectual interests and hobbies, and a totally distorted balance between the fascination of scholarship and the demands of improved public access (Middleton, 1990: 31-33).

This issue of marketplace or mission is as relevant in Australia as it is in Britain.

#### *Museums and Education.*

Interpreting is about encouraging people to think for themselves, not about telling them what to think, or setting society's objectives. (Aldridge, 1989: 86)

As noted in Chapter 1, museums only started to see children as part of their constituency from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Today children, either as students in school groups, or as private visitors, constitute major audience segments at most museums. At the same time, the notion of museums as part of the 'parallel education system', that is, part of 'any form of education offered by individuals, societies and institutions which is separate from formal education programs', is being espoused through the *Ideas for Australia* program (Home, Marsden &

Painter, 1992). Adult education as a primary duty of museums, is articulated as a function of education for citizenship. This may be partly to affirm museums along orthodox lines, and partly as a response to museums being seen as entertainment and leisure.

Within this broadened perception of audiences, the traditional role of museums as educators is also being re-evaluated. Strategies to improve educational services and facilities and make exhibitions and displays more attractive are always under consideration. Education that advocates informal approaches to interpretation and interaction are being examined in line with re-evaluations of theories exploring why people visit museums. Established educational philosophies emphasise exposure to knowledge where the teacher transmits information to a learner. In contrast, progressive approaches are more oriented to the growth of potential within individuals, knowledge as a means to an end and to be supplied according to the needs of the student, and the teacher as facilitator (Hooper-Greenhill, 1983: 127-129).

The ideas of Ivan Illich, Paulo Freire and Paul Goodman on de-schooling society have been drawn on by several museologists to suggest alternative educative strategies within museums. Illich, in 'Deschooling Society' (1970), attacks schooling systems and advocates life-long learning through 'educational webs' around a personalised curriculum that involves a program of learning based on individual needs and interests, with learning taking place in the family, workplace or society in general. Illich claims,

If a person is to grow up, he needs, in the first place, access to things, places, processes, events and records. To guarantee such access is primarily a matter of unlocking the privileged storerooms to which they are presently consigned (Illich, 1970: 22).

Freire says,

Nobody teaches anybody; nobody learns alone; people educate each other (Hansen, 1984: 179).

Michael Ames argues that if museums are to retain their relevance for contemporary society, this will be determined by the degree to which they are 'democratised'. This he defines as:

The extent to which there is increasing and more widespread participation in decision-making regarding administration, educational programming, and collection management in museums, and increased opportunities for independent thought and action in cultural matters.

The democratisation of administration means giving those who work in museums a greater say in the organisation and conditions of their work. The democratisation of education means reducing the role of educational intermediaries and increasing oppor-

tunities for independent and individual learning. The democratisation of collection management means making collections more accessible to the users. (Ames, 1985: 25).

The limited access to collections (some estimates suggest as little as 1-5% of museum collections are on display in major museums although this may be countered in small museums who display all their collections). The typically highly-structured and closed interpretation of objects; and the barriers to wider audiences, Ames suggests, may be overcome by opening up museum storage areas and data bases to the public. This he suggested would augment organised and interpreted exhibitions which currently cater to the interests of those educated classes who seek formal learning or tourist experiences and would make the museum more available and interesting to wider publics (Ames, 1985: 26).

*Museums as Agents of Social Change.* Many commentators are advocating that museums adopt a more pro-active stance—that they should be tackling problems associated with race, class and gender both in their exhibitions and public programs, and facing up to the politics of representation. Museums have been asked to rethink their boundaries and responsibilities (Hushion, 1992). As far back as 1972, John Kinard stated:

Museums must change from passive collectors and narrowly specialised scholars to active participants in meeting today's challenges. They must not only employ new methods but also be a new intermediary that will be unafraid to face complex problems raised by racism, material affluence, poverty, poor housing, unemployment, drugs, deteriorating cities, urban planning, education — all aspects of human existence — and to find the answers. Exhibits should be designed to present these controversial problems side by side with their counterparts in history, correlating current issues with historical facts. Our museums should be at the forefront of change rather than following the dictates of past generations. (Kinard, 1972: 153).

But it is not only in the social area that museums have increasing responsibilities. As Robert Sullivan has argued, there has been a paradigmatic shift from the 'vertical paradigm of progress' to a 'horizontally, global interdependent model'. This is changing the perceived relationship between humans and their environments where people are increasingly viewing themselves as 'participants in a horizontally interconnected ecological system and an interdependent, pluralistic cultural system'. Of course, this shift, and the realisation of the ecological crises the world is facing has ramifications not only for natural history museums but also for diverse museum formats. It requires all museums to be looking for solutions

to environmental and social problems, to be 'engaged institutions committed to the necessity of global survival' (Sullivan, 1992: 41).

#### REPRESENTATION AND MUSEUM PRACTICES

Museums are facing demands for wider representation of cultural diversity and inclusion of groups traditionally missing from museum representations. Apart from those already considered in previous chapters, such groups include the working classes, the poor, young people, children, the handicapped, and the aged. In Australia, the exclusion of working-class life can, in some part, be explained by the connections between the working-classes and immigration. As Andrew Reeves has noted:

Australian working-class culture is a migrant culture ... Many of the culture's institutions and social practices reflect this, as do elements of its symbolism and vocabulary. Australian working-class culture is not a closed system, but one shaped and amended by succeeding waves of migration (Reeves, 1987: 101).

At the 1993 'Images of Women Conference', Robyn Archer challenged museums to include representations of 'My mob':

Does it seem absurd to suggest that the attention to the petty criminal sub-stratum of Australia deserves a place in a museum? That lineage of mine peppered with SP bookies, vaudevillians, jockeys, card sharps, hoteliers, black marketeers and the sorts of sheilas who hooked up with them, cooked for them, dressed up for them, provided their alibis and bore their children.

Or the river culture that was not the glamorous paddle steamer kind? The boys who had to be conscripted unwillingly into World War I and then came back alcoholics. The itinerant fruit pickers and their wives who left school at twelve and shone their brothers' boots and milked the cows and married the returned soldiers who were already on the piss and longed for a home of their own in the city.

or the less than romantic life of the suburbs:

The life that was spent at home from five to twenty-one; that life that progressed from Enfield Primary to Enfield High to Adelaide University with values signified by lawns, meat and three veg, homemade clothes, Hills hoists, the advent of the telly, the past life of the radio, school fetes, Girl guides, swimming carnivals, First Communion, Modess, bicycles, coffee lounges, rock-n-roll, movie matinees, ranch night, Rowley Park Speedway, Oakbank races in the rain, cockling at outer harbour, the Globe newsteel, the Theatre Royal, Henley salt baths, the pill and Anzac Day. (Archer, 1994: 24).

As part of the Western Australian Task Force enquiry into museums in that State, a Labour History Working Party was established to explore concerns for the survival of labour history artefacts and to ensure that the history of working people would be adequately represented in the State's cultural institutions. Among the raft of recommendations, the Working Party noted the

need for both integration and specialisation (a greater priority in the Western Australian Museum on Labour history as well as establishment of a labour history museum); for the re-interpretation of existing collections to acknowledge the labour history embedded in all material culture; and for special assistance to small museums to enable them to adequately represent labour and work history. The report summary concluded that for labour history to be 'alive and vital', community interaction is essential as it is 'the active engagement of people which makes labour history' (Report of the Labour History Working Party, WA, 1991: 2).

These examples illustrate some of the ways museums are being challenged to eliminate the elitism that is often entrenched in traditional museum practices and which can be reflected in exhibitions, public programs, publications and the general museum ethos. This can result in:

- a perception that museums represent 'high cultural' pursuits of learning and science rather than places of popular enlightenment and edification;
- representations that imply a position of 'cultural authoritarianism' and deny the possibility of alternative perspectives (Crossley, 1991: 118).

A 'tyranny of collections' can often support elitist practices. In many museums the care needed for maintaining the holdings that have been built up historically compounds a preoccupation with the past that tends to focus on elites and their material culture. A possible consequence of this is that little attention is given to contemporary collections, or to recent history. Such a situation is also a barrier to any moves toward linking the past with present concerns and problems. It is a tyranny that shapes values, practices and potential development. Further, the extent of many collections, and the conservation expenses can tie up resources so that the museum is strangled by the responsibility of its collection.

#### AUTHORITARIANISM OF CURATORIAL PERSPECTIVE

Some critics argue that one of the barriers to participation lies in the attitude of museum workers to their audiences. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill describes a predominant position as one where the curator perceives him/herself, and is perceived, as an 'expert' whose responsibility it is to offer opportunities for the visitor to 'improve' and attain 'higher levels of knowledge and virtue'. This positions the curator as a 'moral guardian' — one who is also located within a wider network of social institutions, governmental and educational agencies of power and control

(Hooper-Greenhill, 1988: 224). There have also been calls for a brake on those forms of professionalism which distance museum workers from their visitors by creating institutional barriers between them (Jenkinson, 1989). Various proposals have been made to further open up the museum processes and these include:

1, Shifting the emphasis from the role of curator as a source of expertise to that of providing assistance to groups outside museums so as to use the museum resources to make statements within it, to enable enunciation of plural and differentiated views, and to make museums instruments for public debate (Bennett, 1990);

2, Democratising the processes within museums and between museums and their constituencies for a more people-centred approach (Jenkinson, 1989);

3, Adopting a team approach within museums that puts greater control in the hands of curatorial teams (Wright, 1991);

4, Revealing the authorship of displays so as to 'encourage contacts between visitors and public servants, and — by explaining how and why choices were made and hanging or artefact placement decisions reached — to empower visitors to make increasingly sophisticated judgements of their own, by sharing that very information to which the curator was privy in organising the display' (Wright, 1991);

5, Recognising the limited and homogenous nature in Australia of museum curators, researchers and registrars in professionally staffed museums, and addressing this through partnership arrangements between such professionals and alternative groups (Jones, 1991: 137);

6, Museums making commitments to community involvement in research and production of museum products (its collections, displays and publications) so as to 'break down the barriers' between 'experts' and 'non-experts', between high culture and low culture, between disciplines and between small and large museums (Ford, 1991: 145, 148).

Conversely, Elspeth King has argued for greater, and renewed 'investment in the clever curator' in the face of increasing take over of responsibility for museums by 'collection managers', administrators, business managers:

The secret of clever curatorship is that it is often above price. It is driven ultimately by love, passion and commitment to the community which the museum serves. It should not be glass-walled or stamped upon by corporate managers. If our museums are to survive and develop with integrity, it should be nurtured at all costs. (King, 1991: 134).

## NEW DIRECTIONS

The museum is a didactic instrument, designed to build heritage awareness, not for a *public* but for and by a *community*. (attributed to Georges Henri Riviere & Hugues de Varine, 1985).

This section reviews some of the ways in which museums are becoming more 'community-centred' and responsive to community needs. Efforts to re-direct museums may be initiated from outside the institution, from the museum industry itself, or from internal pressures. These efforts may be pro-active or re-active: they may exert democratic principles or constrain and contain devolution of control. Referring back to the Arnstein/Marginson 'Ladder of Citizen Participation', elements of the different 'rungs' may be found in general policies, exhibition development strategies and collections management in various museums. The purpose of this section, then, is to identify some of the major factors for change and to evaluate the extent to which such changes have been introduced into Australian museums, and how effective these changes might be in advancing the basic principles referred to by Bennett in Chapter 1 (museums as collective public property, equal rights of access, fostering civic identity for all, and valuing and representing the culture of all groups within a society).

It would be difficult to find any museum in Australia that might be considered as wholly 'community controlled' with policy being determined by the community, exhibitions being devised, designed and implemented by the community, and collections under the control of the community or even housed within the private realm. Considering the general development and style of museums in terms of management, control, and community involvement, the style of museum most likely to endorse and implement principles of community control is the ecomuseum. However, neighbourhood museums, site museums and cultural resource centres are also being promoted as developments that challenge the values, and practices, of traditional museums. This section therefore concludes with a brief overview of ecomuseums or living history museums.

### NEW POLICIES ESTABLISHED BY GOVERNMENT AND MUSEUM BODIES

In the last few years the Commonwealth and most State governments have initiated museum enquiries which have taken up questions of access and participation to a greater or lesser degree. These include:

*Commonwealth Museums Review (1986-88)*. The Review of Commonwealth Involvement in the Development of Museums and Similar Collecting and Exhibition Institutions involved the Department of Finance and the Department of Arts Heritage and the Environment (now DASETT). The review was to explore the performance of Australian museums so as to identify areas of duplication; opportunities for economies and ways of limiting the Commonwealth's responsibilities in respect to recurrent funding for museums, collecting and exhibition institutions. In effect, the review sought to 'give improved heritage value for the taxpayer dollar'. Although the results of the Review were not published, each of the participating departments released its own discussion paper. These papers have generated on-going debates and informed subsequent policy reviews.

*What Price Heritage?* was released by the Department of Finance in 1989 and argued for a more consumer-orientated approach to the management of museums. It argued there should be an appropriate balance between public/private funding of museums and public/private benefits. On one hand, the paper acknowledged that government intervention in national cultural heritage is justified on the grounds that certain benefits accrue to the population generally whether or not individuals participate first-hand as consumers. However, it also suggested that private benefits (that may include entertainment, education, goods and services, corporate benefits and research) have, to some degree, been disguised as public benefits so that public moneys may have unnecessarily been used to subsidise institutions and their programs (Department of Finance, 1989: 26-32). Public accountability was, therefore, the key theme of this paper.

In contrast, the role of museums in preserving both the nation's material and intangible assets was the organising concern of a rebuttal from the Department of the Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories (DASETT). *What Value Heritage?* (1990) argued that the methodology that Finance had used to evaluate the services provided was flawed. However, DASETT, like Finance, was also concerned with accountability and a cost-benefit analysis although it argued that performance indicators should take account of the specificity of collecting institutions with differing missions and objectives. Although the paper appeared to have difficulty in quantifying benefits, it prefaced its discussion with the comment that



Museums are the cornerstones of our culture... they identify the values, creativity, traditions and tastes of our society, and thus constitute a vital component in the enrichment of quality of life values (DASETT, 1990: 5);

and concluded with reference to access for wider audiences:

For museums to enrich society's intellectual development and cultural identities and values, they must seek to reach all components of society. Increasingly the relevance of museums will be evaluated by the extent to which they meet the needs and expectations of all segments of society. (DASETT, 1990: 48).

#### *State initiatives.*

Queensland. Following on from a State government review of the arts in Queensland, a policy review of the Queensland Museum was conducted in late 1992. A primary term of reference was to determine whether the Queensland Museum was meeting the needs of a diverse Queensland audience, particularly in respect to access and equity. The report (released in 1993), addressed issues of access (physical and intellectual), cultural diversity (gender, class and ethnic), participation (particularly in respect to specific target groups — Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, women, and people of non-English speaking background), and the need for pro-active programs. A key recommendation directed at achieving these objectives was that the Museum effect a change in its internal culture to enable it to embrace access, equity and cultural diversity as well as the needs of regional Queensland. Other recommendations for structural change and resources to implement such measures indicated the need for the State government to provide for, and encourage, such a cultural shift. Social justice issues underscored the enquiry process, as the Report stated:

The Panel addressed the issues of access, equity and diversity in a concentrated way. These matters arose in almost every subject and context of the discussions enjoyed by the Panel. Consequently these matters can be found as an underlying issue in the majority of recommendations of the Report.

New South Wales. In 1989 *A Policy for the Development of Museums and Historic Sites in New South Wales* was released. It recommended policies for the major state collecting institutions, broadening the functions of Historic Houses Trust to co-ordinate policy and advise Government on resource allocation for regional and other non-government museums, and encouragement of a limited number of accredited regional museums of high quality over a proliferation of smaller under-resourced local museums. The Museums Association of Australia (NSW

Branch) published *A Plan for the Future in 1991* and this has subsequently been updated with *Future Directions for Regional and Community Museums in New South Wales* (NSW Ministry for the Arts Museums Advisory Council, 1994). The recommendations of this latest report aim to improve the quality of museum services to the public and the benefits listed include

greater access, understanding and enjoyment of local museums by the public leading to greater public confidence, commitment and support.

Victoria. There have been a number of reports and strategy documents prepared in this State over the last decade — the *Trudgeon Report* (1982), the *Hancock Report* (1986), *Guidelines for Victorian Museums* — a departmental policy document (1990) and the *Victorian Museum Survey Report* (1992). The thrust of this latest report was inward to museums. However, the inquiry also looked at levels of museum involvement with their communities and with educational programs. Museums that actively work with local organisations on community projects, the report stated, 'raises the profile of the museum in the community and establishes mutually beneficial relationships'. Further, it warned that those museums which do not participate in such activities 'will lose relevance to their local communities' (MAA & Arts Victoria, 1993: 60-61). Similarly, the report stressed the need for museums to develop educational activities and, to support this, recommended that established programs of assistance and training in museum education activities be maintained and that the role of museums in school education be recognised by both Arts Victoria and the Department of School Education (MAA & Arts Victoria, 1993: 62-63).

Western Australia. A major research into Western Australian museums was undertaken by the WA State Task Force for Museums during 1991. This review covered the Western Australian Museum as well as regional, community, specialist and other museums. One of the Task Force Working Parties (Public Presentation and Community Involvement Working Party) was given the brief to study 'the ways and the extent to which, museums encourage and respond to community involvement through visitor programmes and displays'. The Report noted that:

Museums face a growing challenge in the increasing (and increasingly discernible) heterogeneity of the society they serve, particularly in a social climate which confers rights upon minority groups and obligations on publicly funded institutions. It is well-accepted that

many sectors of the population do not or cannot access museum services and that, to achieve their public education objects, museums must improve their performance in this area.

Recommendations stressed access and community participation 'in all areas of museum work', the need to redress the disadvantages of remote communities in terms of access to museum resources and potential of diversity of 'presentation techniques and styles' to target a wider range of audiences (Western Australian Department of the Arts: Perth, 1992: 116-122).

Reviews of museum policies and practices such as those mentioned above are, unfortunately, dependent on both government and the institution involved taking up the recommendations and implementing them in the spirit of the report. Too often impediments are met, or made. Changes of government can intervene and bring new agendas to the fore, or economic constraints can impede implementation of projects or increased resourcing. Resistance to change within institutions often blocks new initiatives. Alternatively, a piecemeal approach to introducing innovative programs or policies may result in 'tinkering' that fails to bring about the radical change intended and only results in the institution maintaining the status quo.

*Museum and Heritage Bodies.* Professional associations such as Museums Australia are also taking up the issue of access and participation more actively with an on-going series of articles in 'Museum National', a forthcoming volume of 'Museums Australia Journal' which will be featuring issues of access and communities, as well as a planned in-service course for museum curators and administrators which will cover contemporary issues including those of access and participation. In addition, these topics have been central issues on the agenda at conferences over the last five years.

At a national level, improved community access to Australian cultural heritage collections is also the mission of the Heritage Collections Working Group. This body was set up by the Federal government under the auspices of the Cultural Ministers' Council and given the task of surveying the nation's collections and making recommendations about defining the nature and extent of Australia's heritage collections and coming up with proposals for improving the community's access to this heritage. Physical and intellectual access to collections was seen as a high priority of the Working Group, and recourse to information was seen as a means of increasing access.

In April 1993, the Working Group concluded its work and submitted its report, *Heritage Collections in Australia: A Plan for a New Partnership* (Cultural Minister's Council Heritage Collections Working Group: 1993). Three major recommendations were submitted. The first recommended development of a collaborative national database for heritage items of cultural historical and scientific interest; the second that an interstate touring program for non-art museum materials and collections be established; and the third that a national conservation program be implemented to protect and preserve Australia's cultural heritage. To implement these programs, and develop further initiatives, the Working Group recommended that a Heritage Collections Committee be established by the Cultural Ministers' Council. The Group also set out a number of long-term strategy objectives for the management of Australia's heritage collections:

- 1, 'intellectual and physical' access to our heritage;
- 2, 'care and preservation' of our heritage in order to secure that access for present and future Australians;
- 3, 'research and documentation' of our heritage: to conduct research which increases understanding and knowledge of Australia's cultural heritage and its contribution to an understanding of Australian society (research relating to existing collections and/or fields of interest not yet adequately represented in collections is fundamental to this objective); and
- 4, 'promotion' of our heritage to enhance the contribution of heritage collections to the social, cultural, educational and economic life of Australia and to relate the value and impact of Australia's moveable heritage to other realms of the National Estate.

#### CHANGING MUSEUM PRACTICES

In physical terms, access to museums has been improved in many ways. Capital development in new facilities (at Commonwealth, State and local levels) has resulted in greater attention being paid to physical access, new exhibition styles, and installation of hands-on activities in many larger museums. The 'tyranny of distance' is being overcome with several major museums establishing subsidiary branches, extending their outreach activities and producing a variety of touring programs ranging from full-scale exhibitions to display 'kits'. A proliferation of smaller museums, and some fragmented museum services are also helping to overcome the tyranny of

distance. Diversification of museum topics into specialised museums can also be an avenue for broadening access.

At the same time many institutions are looking at visitor facilities with the result that they are extending retailing, restaurants, and spaces for public activities such as performance, entertainment etc. These sorts of facilities are not only income earners. They are drawcards that can bring into museums many people who may not otherwise visit museums and who are increasingly looking for 'a cultural/social experience' more than purely educational content.

In the light of developments at both government and institutional levels many museums are reviewing policies so as to include access as a corporate goal. For example, the Australian Museum's Corporate Strategic Plan for 1990-92 refers not only to the goal of increasing multicultural awareness and representation but also to increasing information access through responding to the needs of the community, and demands from audiences, by examining museum texts, encouraging a more open attitude by staff and through promoting the collection (objects, data etc.) to the public and to other institutions (Skates, 1991).

The expressed philosophy of The Powerhouse Museum is: 'to be a museum for us all with a mission to ensure services and programs accessible to all the community'. It has also identified groups needing special attention to ensure access and equivalence of service and is catering for these groups with the introduction of tour guides for the hearing impaired, tactile maps for the blind, multilingual information brochures, signed tours, and community language tours etc.

At the Museum of Victoria, principles of social justice and equal opportunity (in respect to dealings with both employees and visitors), and the promoting of community access to collections, information and expertise, are inscribed in the Museums' corporate goals.

Although these types of statements are both broad and generalised, they do articulate a changing climate of attitude wherein practical measures may, and are being, introduced.

*Museum Practices.* Conceptual as well as practical changes are starting to be introduced into museums. Changes in museum philosophies, modification to interpretive practices, acknowledgement of societal roles and new relationships between the museum and its audiences underlie new practices being introduced into museums. The growth of interest in social history has

opened a window of opportunity for the histories of ordinary, working-class people, of minority interest groups, of Robyn Archer's 'mob', to be represented within the museum. Some of the major achievements have been: a re-evaluation of the way museums use their objects to make meaning, alternative modes of representation, and some moves toward a more participatory relationship between museums and their publics.

*Shift from Object- to People- or Idea-Centred Approaches.* Museums are gradually making a shift from object centred to people/idea centred approaches. Some critics claim a 'tyranny of objects' prioritises objects over contexts and assumes objects 'speak for themselves'. It is argued object-centred practices tend to ignore the human experience associated with objects, or to separate objects from processes. Further, objects, and collections determine ongoing collecting practices, display techniques and interpretive strategies, rather than using objects to represent themes or ideas. But, as George MacDonald and Stephen Alsford told the CAMA Conference in 1989: 'Museums are beginning to wake up to the fact that their primary focus should not be objects, but people' (MacDonald & Alsford, 1991: 1).

Stephen Weil's influential comments on 'rethinking' the museum are being taken up in this context. Weil has questioned the orthodox assumptions about museums that their primary purpose lies in the collection and care of objects. He quotes Nelson Goodman of Harvard University, 'Works work when, by stimulating inquisitive looking, sharpening perception, raising visual intelligence, widening perspectives, bringing out new connections and contrasts... they participate in the organisation and reorganisation of experience, in the making and remaking of our worlds' and suggests these principles can be applied to museum practices to make the underlying value of objects evident so that the emphasis shifts from object to ideas and the museum paradigm becomes one devoted to preservation, truth, and access (Weil, 1990: 44-60). When museums start to interpret objects in order to focus on ideas and values, on social contexts and processes they are better able to provide intellectual access, disseminate information, illuminate, pose questions, develop skills and empower visitors.

*Shift in Interpretation from Closed to More Open Forms, to Alternative Perspectives.* As the material content of museums comes under scrutiny, so do their interpretive practices. Revisionist historians have raised questions

about the positivism of museum displays and the closure to which this gives rise. Consequently, museums are being challenged to provide displays that reflect different perspectives or allow for the possibility of alternative readings. As Louise Crossley told the 1989 CAMA conference: 'We need to be less absolutist and more experimental, but also more explicit and more critical, in creating our product' and described the Migration Museum's exhibition *Strictly Black* as an example:

An exhibition of costume, all of it black, on dressmakers' dummies in glass cases, with small labels, and no other overt interpretative devices. It sounds as dull as ditchwater, as Clayton's as you can get. But it is not, because the visitor is invited to view the costumes from a single, simple, explicit point of view — that wearing black clothes communicates a range of messages about status, personality types and emotions in the wearer.

So this exhibition ranges from black underwear with its suggestions of illicit sex to the black homburg of respectability, from the black of mourning to the tail coat and top hat of social prominence; from the practicality of the little black dress to the anonymity of the burnous. It also raises the question — why do I wear the colours, black amongst them, that I do. The exhibition says nothing about design, manufacture, age, provenance, fabric etc. of the costume. It is not comprehensive, but is coherent, and for me it was one of those 'ah ha' experiences which related my known world to a new view; 'of course, but I've never quite thought of it like that before.' (Crossley, 1991:118).

Allowing perspectives other than that of the curator or professional staff within the museum space goes a long way along the path to a more participatory environment and is a practice emerging with the advent and growth of community access spaces. On this same issue, Szekeres has argued that museum displays inherently present biased pictures and has suggested ways to remedy this by acknowledging the subjectivity of interpretations:

We present our version of the truth but we rarely admit this to the visitor and leave no room for there being any dialogue, debate or real visitor participation. One direction which can be explored is to make explicit the interpretive processes that go on in the selection of ideas and artefacts when mounting exhibitions. (Szekeres, 1991: 121).

One example Szekeres quotes is from a display of cultural diversity in childhood where the Migration Museum found they could not locate appropriate examples from working-class children. To overcome the misleading picture of childhood, a label was included which explained the omissions. This procedure can be extended by including an acknowledgement panel in each exhibition that explains concepts guiding makers

and include a section for visitor responses and opinions —

we must blow the myth of neutrality and objectivity and acknowledge the subjective nature of the interpretation we present (Szekeres, 1991: 122).

Less 'absolutist' approaches are ways in which the museum experience may be modified so as to be less daunting to visitors and to encourage engagement with the objects and ideas presented. And alternative perspectives can introduce balance into exhibitions as well as speak for different elements within the museum's audiences.

*Encouraging Participative Learning.* Underlying this thrust is an anticipation of different outcomes. Although the mission of museums is still predominantly one of education, as already discussed, there are a number of museologists advocating the 'deschooling' of museums. George MacDonald of the Canadian Museum of Civilisation suggested that, rather than reforming and imposing cultural values, museum displays and collections should be used

to help people better understand the human condition and environment (MacDonald & Alsford, 1991: 1).

Key concepts of this new approach are: dialogue, advocacy, democratization, participation and empowerment. Museums must:

Encourage the public to take a participative role in the learning and decision making processes. By addressing controversial issues they must stimulate debate. They must make accessible a wide range of information, representing different viewpoints and the values not only of the social mainstream but of minority groups too. And they must teach their audiences to think critically, to be able to weigh the opposing evidence and make up their own minds. (MacDonald & Alsford, 1991: 2).

MacDonald & Alsford address de-schooling more specifically in their study of the Canadian Museum of Civilisation (CMC), *A Museum for the Global Village*. 'Education', they note, is involved with the transmission of culture and is broadly interpreted as 'the development of knowledge, understanding, skills, and character, to programme values into its recipients and thereby influence their behaviour' whereas 'Learning' is perceived more as an interactive, self-directed, personal process which is a 'continuing and permanent process, an activity inherent in living which helps us to survive and progress — to come to terms with, and to exploit, our knowledge environment'. They argue that museums should be situated within learning so the programs at the CMC have been organised around the concept of a 'learning resource' rather than an 'educational institution'. (MacDonald & Alsford, 1989: 156)

The processes by which the learning function in museums is carried out are also being reviewed. Instead of a formalised didacticism, museums are realising that

Museum learning is self-paced, self-directed, non-linear, and visually oriented (Chandler Screven quoted in Gurian, 1991).

New information technologies with interactive and multimedia presentations offer ways into this form of learning. The Powerhouse Museum has used such technologies in its exhibitions programs. Touch screens throughout the Museum offer interactive opportunities. You can test your memory of yesteryear's fashions, try out your flair for decor, design a jet fighter, shear a mechanical sheep, or check your knowledge of power sources in the energy game. Overseas these developments are even more advanced as has recently been demonstrated with the IBM virtual reality interactive exhibition on Pompeii at the Australian Museum. A joint project between IBM and the Italian Government, this exhibition links the original frescos, artefacts and statues of the doomed city of Pompeii with a massive database of information. An installation of 26 touch screen computers and three-dimensional modelling software allowed visitors to interactively explore Pompeii as it was in 79BC. Visitors could take in a reconstructed garden, wander into a room of frescoes, stroll down the streets of the town, visit the stadium, explore the mansions of the rich and scroll through a banquet of Roman recipes. 'This is what museums of the future will look like' predicted John Harvey, a spokesman for IBM (Financial Review, 26 September, 1994).

*Encouraging Community Participation.* Various strategies are being developed by innovative museums to encourage greater community participation. Higher levels of community participation can be encouraged by obtaining public input into design and end-on evaluation through inviting visitor comments. Elaine Gurian has described how, during the 1960s, two museum directors (Frank Oppenheimer and Michael Spock) independently pioneered 'contextual, direct-experience interactivity' into exhibitions in ways that invited the audiences to 'participate in their own learning'; Oppenheimer with 'hands-on' participatory learning which he introduced into his Exploratorium, and Spock through consultation with audience groups. At the Exploratorium, visitors are introduced to science by examining how they see, hear and feel and the principles developed here have influenced subsequent science museums around the world, from

the Parc de la Villette in Paris, and Oklahoma City's Omniplex to the Victorian Museum's Scienceworks. As director of the Boston Children's Museum from 1962 to 1985, Spock brought a different approach to displays. He felt displays should empower visitors and give confidence to the learner to cope with the world, so he set out to find out what his visitors wanted to know. Prior to an exhibition being completed, mock-ups would be set up and audiences would be asked to comment on feedback boards. In this way audience and museum staff became display creators (Gurian, 1991: 179-181).

A strategy is being introduced into some museums with displays inviting visitor comments. The Migration Museum has used this approach extensively and it is now becoming a feature in other Australian museums. The Australian Museum's Rapid Response Programme is one such initiative. Here, the Museum prepares small exhibits (in a six-week turn around) on topical issues. An objective of the exhibits is to provide a space for visitors to express their views, cast a vote, or make comment. Since introducing this program the Museum has addressed topics as varied as oil spillages, wetlands usage, the 'Mabo decision' and GATT. The GATT presentation also included a theatre performance (GATT and FAX) and a public debate where alternative speakers were able to voice their opinions. The Museum's program sparked a critical response from Dr David Clark who, in a letter to the Financial Review (24 January, 1994), attacked the views expressed by speakers, dismissed the theatre event, and suggested that the involvement of the Australian Museum in such areas is inappropriate. In response, Director, Des Griffin, replied that this and similar programs are part of a wider strategy to make the Australian Museum a 'forum for the voicing of alternative views' and made the point that this position is consistent with the Museum's publicly stated mission 'to increase understanding of our natural environment and underdeveloped nations'. Consequently, GATT is 'of great relevance' to the Australian Museum (Letter to the Editor, Financial Review, 3 February, 1994).

A more comprehensive devolution of curatorial power and museum control was trialled in the CARA (Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation) project at the University of California's Wright Art Gallery. Alicia Gonzalez and Edith Tonelli describe how this interpretative exhibition of work from the Chicano art movement was the product of an advisory panel of 40-50



scholars, artists, and administrators with the gallery limiting its authority and reducing its role to one of facilitator and financial manager. It has been, they claim,

as much a process of achieving consensus as it has been an ongoing process of negotiating, beginning with the first proposal in 1983 and ending with the closing of the exhibition at its last venue in 1994 (Gonzalez & Tonelli, 1992: 262).

One of the objectives was to re-evaluate the processes by which museums organise presentations of a living culture so that the organisation processes would 'reflect the spirit and values of the culture' and hopefully develop a new model for under-represented groups to express their culture to a diverse public (Gonzalez & Tonelli, 1992: 265-266). Planning conferences and meetings of the advisory council met in various forms and formats to establish the structure for the exhibition process. The Advisory Council acted in both consulting and decision-making capacities and was involved at all stages of planning, implementation and evaluation. In addition, a national honorary committee comprised of members from the public-service, education, business and entertainment sectors ensured the project received support from diverse external bodies. With this organisational structure and the project's mission, the gallery was challenged to accommodate new partners without abandoning its professional responsibilities, to mount an exhibition that balanced both art and social context, and to find ways of acknowledging and communicating with a culturally diverse and uninitiated audience (Gonzalez & Tonelli, 1992: 276).

### *Opening Up Collections.*

Physical access to museums and their collections is a prerequisite to intellectual access' (Cameron, quoted in MacDonald & Alsford, 1989: 112).

Strategies for improving access in intellectual, physical and emotional terms include: more frequent changes of displays; open storage and access to collections; and computerisation.

1, Display Strategies. Although an array of motives may inform the allocation of more space to displays and exhibitions and the creation of more elaborate presentations, such exhibitionary practices are also perceived to be serving wider and more diverse audiences by popularising museums. Until very recently, the longevity of permanent displays could be extraordinary. A diorama depicting an Aboriginal Camp-site at the Queensland Museum was on display from 1914 until the museum closed its doors to the public at the end of 1985, in order to move to new premises

(Mather, 1986: 73). The Australian War Memorial still has a number of long term displays which have had an average lifespan of approximately 34 years. A uniform group display remained virtually unaltered from opening day in 1941 until 1983, as did a display of First World War heavy equipment (McKernan, 1991). In contrast, we have the 'blockbuster', increasing temporary displays, and the touring of exhibitions which, although serving multiple functions and having a number of controversial impacts, also offer greater access to objects and actively construct new, and larger, audiences.

2, Open, or visible storage. This concept was pioneered at the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology where the research collection has been organised as 'visible storage galleries' where artefacts are stored in locked glass cases or drawers but are visually available to the public. No interpretive material is provided but each artefact is extensively documented and books with computer print-out sheets for each object are available to visitors. As Ames describes it, the system operates

like a large library or supermarket, with the exception that customers are allowed to handle objects only under staff supervision (Ames, 1977: 65-79).

Another Canadian example is the Alberni Museum—a small community facility which has arranged two of its display galleries along a modified visible storage mode that combines

public access to collections normally held in out-of-bounds storage areas with a simplified popular catalogue format. A series of interpretive orientation displays weave through the total gallery/storage area to guide the visitor (Ames, 1985: 25-31).

The result, Ames contends, is a museum that enables individuals to participate in the recovery and documentation of their own history.

In contrast, the Glenbow-Alberta Institute at Calgary is a large urban museum which has introduced a stratified form of access which is limited and controlled by the requirements of particular collections and the intellectual interests of visitors. Access is arranged on three levels with higher density areas having lower levels of interpretation. Level 1 contains didactic exhibits with high levels of interpretation and lowest density of items; Level 2 contains publicly accessible study collections and Level 3 the highest density of artefacts and least labelling with controlled access. Located between the levels are education resource centres, study areas, and curatorial offices (Ames, 1985: 25-31).

The new Canadian Museum of Civilisation (CMC) has also proposed a novel approach to



increasing access to collections whilst ensuring security and conservation procedures are not compromised. Consideration was given to open storage and typological exhibits, to 'window-in-the-wall' visual access to collections holding room, as well as to the possibility of enclosed, transparent tunnels which would allow visitors to 'look but not touch'. The solution adopted, however, involves the use of Disney-style 'People-movers' which will carry visitors on a 'voyage of exploration' of laboratories, storage spaces and work areas. In this way CMC's 'treasure-vault' will be specially unlocked for those modern day voyagers, and they will see a cross-section of artifacts periodically selected from the reserve collections'. This innovation, in conjunction with laser disc technology which will combine visual images of artifacts and textual information, is being offered as a solution to the dilemma of access versus preservation (MacDonald & Alsford, 1989: 112-118).

These examples illustrate different responses from museums to the perceived needs of their different communities whilst satisfying the requirements of the institution in respect to collections management.

3, Computerisation. Although the CMC's use of computer technology is seen as a model, several Australian collecting institutions are gradually introducing new computerised features. For example, Old Parliament House, SA, has adopted new display techniques to provide new types of information. Susan Tonkin describes the use of computer technology to meet the needs of new audiences. This is an IBM InfoWindows, touch-screen package, which has been adapted to teach politics, specifically the South Australian electoral system. The program is entitled 'It's Your Vote' and is targeted at teenagers, under 18, who are about to vote and need to be convinced of its importance. The program uses two screens side by side for game of choices. Reported results are that schools groups (for whom the program was designed) 'love it'; that teachers of politics appreciate it; and adults also find the program appealing. The equipment (touch screen) is easy to use and non-threatening for people unused to computers. Tonkin sees this type of program as a suitable method of conveying vast amounts of information in a palatable and entertaining way (Tonkin, 1991: 99).

Interactive computer programs can make more information available as well as broadening the appeal of museums. Increasing access to collections and supporting data through computer

catalogues is on the agenda of a number of Australian museums, a development which should be accelerated if the proposals of the Heritage Working Group are taken up. If the concept of a 'Distributed National Collection' is to become a reality it will only be achieved by establishing a comprehensive information base for heritage collections comprised of a network of linked databases between museums holding significant material.

#### NEW ROLES: NEW TYPES OF MUSEUMS

Debates regarding the changing role of museums over the period since the 1970s have resulted in the development of new functions for museums, new museum formats and have resulted in expanded conceptions of the nature of museums and their purposes. Here, we review some of the more influential of these developments.

*Access Galleries.* The intent of access galleries is to enable community-based exhibitions, either generated from specific communities themselves, or as collaborative exercises between community and institution. The Migration Museum, which first opened its community access gallery in 1987, pioneered access galleries in Australia. The Museum makes space and facilities available through its Focus gallery and displays are co-operative ventures between staff and various communities who apply for space. Museum policy is neither to endorse nor reject views expressed by communities in their displays. However, the Museum does check scripts and ask display organisers not to offend. In a round-table discussion on access galleries, the director said:

Their stories are sometimes politically and socially horrific — their statements may be political rather than artistic, but we don't interfere unless the text is deliberately provocative. We have a curator to give advice if it's needed and the curator and I often discuss whether something is provocative or not, it's a constant tension. (Museum National, 1993: 6)

The concept has been taken up by other museums as a survey by Madelaine Galbraith (1993) reveals (Tables 2-3). Her survey, whilst neither comprehensive nor critical, shows that community access has been more readily taken up by art galleries than museums.

Museums with Access Galleries pending or under consideration at the date of this survey included: Australian Museum, South Australian Museum, Fairfield City Museum, Echuca Wharf Museum, Sydney Jewish Museum, Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historical Museum and Edith Cowan University Museum of Childhood.

The ways in which these various museums operate their access spaces may be viewed in conjunction with Marginson's model discussed earlier. Galbraith's information suggests that some museums insist on maintaining control, that others are taking up joint venture roles with their communities, and some are allowing community-directed displays. Despite the limited scope of this survey, it is, nevertheless, indicative of a changing climate within museums and suggests different relationships are being nurtured between museums and diverse communities of users.

*New Museum Formats.* Although the concept of a Children's Museum is not new, with the first one being opened in Boston in 1899, the idea has grown until there are now over 350 in the USA. In Australia the first children's museum to open was at the Museum of Victoria (1985), and later the Museum of Childhood was established at the Edith Cowan University, in Western Australia. The Children's Museum at the Museum of Victoria has hosted over 1 million visitors in the parent museum and touring exhibition in regional centres, with audiences made up of equal numbers of children and adults. Children's museums are usually theme-based, often holistic in linking arts and sciences, and families are their main target audiences. The challenge to exhibition planners is to encourage engagement and stimulation across this age range. An important feature of children's museums is the range of follow-up facilities they provide in the form of reference rooms, discovery rooms, libraries, models, and specimens. As Elaine Gurion of the Boston Children's Museum has said, children's museums are a 'fusion of its community centre, library and traditional museum' (Featherstone, 1991).

*Opening Up of the Concept of Museums.* Site museums, multiple site museums, house museums, living history museums, cultural centres, heritage centres, interpretive centres, and keeping places are all developments or extensions of the museum concept that are increasingly broadening the function, scope and appeal of the museum operation. Living history museums such as Sovereign Hill in Ballarat, Broken Hills' Living Museum, and the Living Museum of the West, are some of the developments that exemplify this approach. The latter, however has

TABLE 2. Access spaces by state and by type. \* Art gallery and museum facility combined; \*\* Includes one combined art gallery/museum facility.

State	Museum	Art Gallery	Craft Gallery	Performing Space	Cultural Centre
ACT	-	2	1	-	-
NSW	8	6	1	1	-
NT	1*	3*	1	1	-
QLD	2	6	-	-	-
SA	3	2	-	-	1
Tas	1*	1*	-	-	-
Vic	10**	14**	2	-	-
WA	2	8	-	-	-

adopted the principles of the ecomuseum and it is the ecomuseum movement which has provided the museum world with a range of models and new concepts that, in the view of some, offer a radically transformative idea of the museum.

*Ecomuseums.* The ecomuseum movement took off in France then spread to Canada where it was adapted to Canadian circumstances. The concept has also been taken up in a number of countries around the world including Sweden, Portugal, Equador, India, and America, and is most likely to appeal to communities concerned about self-development. In many ways, the principles and philosophies underlying ecomuseums — community participation and community control, interdisciplinarity, and interaction with socio-economic development — are contrary to the traditional concept that museums are universalising institutions, fixed in time and space, presenting an objective view of the world.

Georges Henri Riviere is widely viewed as the founding father of the ecomuseum movement although it was Hugues de Varine, who coined the term 'ecomuseum'. Riviere defined the ecomuseum as:

An instrument conceived, fashioned and operated jointly by a public authority and a local population. The public authority's involvement is through the experts, facilities and resources it provides: the local population's involvement depends on its aspirations, knowledge and individual approach. (Rivière, 1985: 182-183).

Ecomuseums are based on a reassessment of the purpose and function of museums. In 1984, an ICOM group called the First International Workshop on Ecomuseums and the New Museology at which it declared its philosophy in a document entitled the 'Declaration of Quebec'. The Declaration stressed interdisciplinarity, communications, community and individual development, and service to 'the creative imagination,

constructive realism and the humanitarian principles upheld by the international community'. The basic principles for this new museology were summarised as follows:

In a modern world which is attempting to muster all the resources that can contribute to development, museology must seek to extend its traditional roles and functions of identification, conservation and education to initiatives which are more far-reaching than those objectives, and thus integrate its action more successfully into the human and physical environment.

In order to achieve this objective and at the same time involve the public in its activities, museology must have increasing recourse to interdisciplinarity, modern methods of communication used in all cultural action, and modern management methods which involve the consumer.

While preserving the material achievements of past civilisations and protecting the achievements characteristic of the aspirations and technology of today, the new museology — ecomuseology, community museology and all other forms of active museology — is primarily concerned with community development, reflecting the driving forces in social progress and associating them in its plans for the future.

This new movement puts itself firmly at the service of the creative imagination, constructive realism and the humanitarian principles upheld by the international community. It has become a way of bringing people together to learn about themselves and each other, to develop their critical faculties and express their concern to establish together a world which takes a responsible attitude towards its own intrinsic riches.

In this context, the concerns of the movement, which is anxious to adopt a global approach, are scientific, cultural, social and economic.

The movement utilizes all the resources at the disposal of museology (collection, conservation, scientific research, restitution and dissemination, creativity) and

TABLE 3. Museum access galleries and facilities offered.

Museum	Access space incorporated with other display space	Museum directed displays	Joint directed displays	Community directed displays	Gallery services
Albury Regional Museum	Yes - 10%	Y	-	-	Y
Cobar Museum	No - separate	-	Y	-	Y
Griffith Pioneer Park Museum	Incorporated	Y	-	-	Y
Powerhouse Museum	No - separate	-	Y	-	Y
Westpak Museum	Yes - 40%	-	-	Y	Y
NT Museum of Arts & Sciences	Incorporated	-	-	-	Y
Queensland Museum	Yes - 50%	Y	-	-	Y
Townsville Museum	Yes - 66%	Y	-	-	Y
Migration Museum	Separate	-	-	Y	Y
Old Parliament House	Separate	-	-	Y	Y
Australian Gallery of Sport	Separate	-	Y	-	Y
George Evans Museum	Yes - 33%	-	Y	-	Y
Montrose Cottage & Eureka Museum	Yes - 100%	-	Y	-	Y
Merrigum & District Historical Society	Separate	-	-	Y	-
Museum of Chinese Australian History	Incorporated	-	-	Y	Y
Museum of Victoria	Incorporated	-	Y	-	Y
National Wool Museum	Yes - 40%	-	-	Y	Y
Science works	Incorporated	-	-	-	-
WA Museum	Separate	-	Y	Y	Y

adapts them to each environment and project. (UNESCO, Museum, 1985: 201)

The Declaration then went on to outline the processes whereby this form of museology could be acknowledged and developed.

In 1992, Kenneth Hudson reviewed the ecomuseum movement in France and concluded that although the ecomuseum promised to be the 'perfect solution' to perceived problems that

museums were grappling with, it was based on naïve ideas that were 'impracticable and starry-eyed'. Today, he suggests, none of the ecomuseums in France carries out the complete ecomuseum task as it was originally conceived, nor are any of them controlled by the people who live in their immediate environs. By the end of the 1980s ecomuseums

had been absorbed into the system. They were in the charge of conventionally trained and qualified curators (conservateurs), they were controlled by the Direction des Musées de France, and they had been grouped into a special federation. They no longer represented a threat to anything or anybody. They had been tamed and made respectable. They were not revolutionary institutions any more. (Hudson, 1992: 28-29).

In a somewhat different vein, Dominique Poulot questioned the reformatory nature of French ecomuseums and doubts whether they ever promised a new relationship between institution and public. Even at their outset, he suggests, the concept of linking heritage to specific communities and localities was of particular interest to the French Ministry of Environment as the ecomuseum could be seen as part of the administrative framework for managing the environment and a vehicle for regional planning and national development. When Mitterand and the socialists won government in 1981 they introduced a new program of cultural preservation in which the ecomuseum was accorded a more political role. It could provide a

coherent overview of the customs, skills, struggles, subjective experiences and socio cultural resources of a given population (Querrien quoted to Poulot, 1994: 73).

and preserve traditional skills. This, Poulot suggests, reflected a desire to differentiate the sociocultural goals of the new government from those of the old, to represent community and working class values, and to rebuild nationalist-republican sentiment. Despite a new class of curators concerned with development of the community, and advancing a critical culture, Poulot claims the new museums were expected to repair the 'torn fabric of a society in crisis':

They were given the task of 'softening' such consequences of technological change as the demise of certain industries and the sociocultural conflicts resulting from economic crisis, unemployment and immigration. In sum, they were supposed to alleviate the identity crises of the 'victims' of the new economic situation and help populations in transition, especially in the villes nouvelles, or new towns. Unwittingly, the ecomuseum came to be identified with sites of industrial conversion. ... Activities previously associated with progressivism and the revitalisation of culture were being replaced by an artificial and manipulative atmosphere of nostalgia. The ecomuseum was falling victim to the contradiction between its function as representative of specific communities and its role in the

scholarly construction of an ethnology of France. Above all, the attempt by communities to reappropriate their cultural heritage proved difficult to reconcile with the need to promote tourism. (Poulot, 1994: 76, 80).

Irrespective of these criticisms, the principles underlying ecomuseums have stimulated debates about the role and direction of museums in general. They have had an international impact. They have provided models for communities, particularly for First Peoples and people of Third World countries. They have generated a whole range of fresh perspectives on museums, for both professionals in the field and outsiders concerned about culture and heritage. They have provided models for more democratising practices and raised the possibility of community empowerment.

## CASE STUDIES

Kenneth Hudson, in 'Museums of Influence', listed 37 museums which he considered had

broken new ground in such an innovative or striking way that other museums have felt disposed or obliged to follow their example.

Each of these museums, Hudson claimed,

by its existence, its approach and its style, has met a real social need (Hudson, 1988: vii).

There did appear to be a Eurocentric bias to the listing, and, as Hudson indicates, many of these institutions are no longer at the cutting edge of museum practices.

Although the following examples include several of those museums selected by Hudson, they tend to be more concerned with the social needs of minority groups, of smaller communities who find themselves submerged, or who are intent on meeting very specific needs such as recovering lost histories and identities, restoring social cohesion and sense of community, or allowing people to take more control of their lives, rather than for more generalised needs identified by Hudson. The museums selected here are also ones in which explicit efforts have been made to use the institution either as a vehicle for social change or, alternatively, as a way of controlling change or modifying the pace of socio-economic development.

### GALLERY 33, BIRMINGHAM MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY, BIRMINGHAM, U.K.

When this extension to the Museum was opened in 1990, the objective was to take a Victorian ethnological collection and re-present the material to contemporary audiences. It was also intended to incorporate current thinking on the way cultural anthropology should be presented, and to provide hands-on, multisensory experien-

ces that would stimulate intellectual interaction with both concepts and the artefacts themselves. The mission statement refers to the Museum providing

a meeting ground of cultures — an exhibition about the way people live: beliefs, values, customs and art from around the world.

The display technique aims to:

encourage visitors to examine assumptions they make about their own and other people's cultures. It explores anthropological themes at a popular level, using a cross-cultural approach. It integrates artefacts from contemporary minority and majority cultures in Birmingham with the historic museum collection. (Jones, 1992: 222).

The displays attempt to declassify and mix objects by integrating material from art and history collections in order to break down both museum traditions and racial divisions. Gallery 33 aims to be a resource for developing 'antiracist' or 'race equality' education and for changing public attitudes. However, as a review of the Gallery's performance has argued, it fails to achieve its goals of being a 'meeting ground of cultures' because there is still a refusal to recognise that cultures will not interact on equal terms until societies operate on the basis of equality (Jones, 1992, and Jones & Ramamurthy, 1992: 33).

#### ANACOSTIA MUSEUM, WASHINGTON, DC

In the early 1970s, the Smithsonian Institute established this museum as an outreach branch under the direction of John Kinard. Kinard immediately set up a series of innovative and radical programs that dealt with issues relevant to the local community — a black ghetto area. The most significant feature of the Anacostia Museum is the dialogue which has been established between the Museum and people in the community:

The museum was an experience that enfranchised a community of people and enabled them to talk about their lives and to take greater responsibility for the reconstruction of themselves and their children (Gaither in Karp et al., 1992).

Under Kinard, the Museum pioneered new ways of involving the community such as unusual programs for children, teenagers and adults (Ruffins in Karp et al., 1992). The Anacostia Museum was launched to prominence with one of its earliest exhibits on *Rats*, a display that looked at the history of rat plagues and related this to the local experiences of rat infestations. This was followed by displays on the black history of Anacostia and another on social problems of the area (crime, drugs, housing, unemployment, education). These exhibitions have drawn on the community for planning and production and through this process of interchange the museum has become

a vehicle for improving quality of life in Anacostia (Kinard & Nighbert, 1972). (See Chapter 3).

#### BROOKLYN CHILDREN'S MUSEUM, USA

Founded as early as 1899, socio-demographic changes from the 1950s were the catalyst for major changes in the 1980s that transformed relations between the Museum and its neighbourhood. Under the directorship of Mindy Duitz, a new direction was forged to enable the Museum to more adequately meet the needs of its community. Part of the Museum's new mission was to accept unaccompanied children into the Museum, and to provide training opportunities ranging from high school and college internships to adolescent and adult volunteer opportunities for all members of the community. Audience needs were determined through research and evaluation studies. The result is an array of public programs, school programs, after-school programs, and a pilot latchkey program run in conjunction with the local school district. The program for unaccompanied children, Kids Crew, is run as an informal club with activities, library and discovery boxes. A development of this for older children — the Teen Intern Program — offers young people paid work experience in the Museum as well as workshops on careers and academic training. Duitz believes these programs will be

a model of institution commitment to community needs for museums as well as for other cultural, recreational and educational organisations (Duitz, 1992: 260).

#### AK-CHIN INDIAN COMMUNITY ECOMUSEUM, ARIZONA, USA

Nancy J. Fuller has described an example of an ecomuseum in the Arizona desert which has developed out of a community-based education model. During the mid-1980s there was a growing realisation among the Ak Chin desert Indian people that their traditional way of life was being threatened by rapid development. The concept of a museum, more specifically an ecomuseum, was proposed as a vehicle for passing on culture to the younger generation and for restoring community pride. The community was drawn into planning and development to create a

participatory, multi-disciplinary, community-operated educational institution organised around an integrated concept of culture, territory and human activity.

Community goals included: restoring a sense of community identity, promoting controlled development; and establishing a new type of museum, one that would be

an institution of self knowledge and a place to learn and regularly practice the skills and attitudes needed for community problem solving (Fuller, 1992: 361).

Some of the comments from community members confirm the positive developments flowing from the project:

The land development and clearance for the farm enabled us to realise the significance of our past through artifacts and archeological sites. These new insights awakened the curiosity of the community about where they came from, who they are, and where they are going. It made them realise the need for a cultural preservation program. (Charles Carlyle).

This is a start to help our community in preserving today's information for tomorrow's generation and along with this, our culture. (Elaine Boehm).

You get ideas from visits to other museums. Then you go back home and apply the ideas in your culture in ways that involve the whole community. (Wendy Aviles).

I think the museum staff can be the spark that will help the community broaden its in-depth understanding of the lifeways of our ancestors. We will be role models and educators to our community and to other tribes as well. From our archaeological training we are becoming cultural interpreters that will allow us to preserve and celebrate our identity. (Johnny Lopez).

#### CHINATOWN HISTORY MUSEUM, NEW YORK

Established in 1990, its aim is to reclaim the community's neglected past by exploring the role of Chinese New Yorkers, non-Chinese New Yorkers, and tourists in Chinatown. John Kuo Wei Tchen, the director, described this museum as a 'dialogic museum' that engages with its audiences to mutually explore the memory and meaning of the area's past. This dialogue is achieved in various ways. Firstly a specific element of the community is targeted to provide input from research through to exhibition and beyond. Visitors are engaged with questions, historical databases, and photographic collections to stimulate memory and discussion. In the Memories of New York Chinatown exhibition a series of options have been planned into the display so there are layers of information and involvement on offer to visitors and the ultimate aim is for each visitor to have the opportunity to collaborate with museum staff in 'documenting and discussing his or her memories and reflections'.

This unorthodox approach allows visitors to discuss themes and details of the exhibition; add their memories, photographs, documents and personal memorabilia to the exhibition and the CHM archive collection; help the CHM staff locate collections and people to speak to; and help the staff listen to and learn from the visitors' perspectives, interests, and needs so that the organisation can more effectively engage future visitors. (Tchen, 1992: 308).

#### CLAREMONT MUSEUM, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Opened in 1975, this is a community museum under a management committee which is directly responsible to the local Council. With one full-time curator and three part-time staff, the Museum provides a number of outreach services over and above normal curatorial and exhibition functions and through an array of activities interacts with the local community, church groups, schools, and the business community. Its activities over the 1992/93 year reveal a museum fulfilling its mission to 'serve the district and the community — past, present and future'.

The Museum started collecting contemporary costumes to provide a resource that will focus on the designers and retailers of fashion objects who lived, worked and/or sold their products in the Claremont business area between 1970 and 1990; hosted a fashion parade of the collection to bring the activities of the Museum to the forefront in the business district; and copied Claremont Rate Books onto microfilm as a community resource and to facilitate an inventory of the heritage buildings of the area.

In order to reach a larger, non-museum-visiting public and challenge these audiences to take part in public discussions on local issues, the Museum produced and placed in various public venues from Perth to Fremantle Regional displays that depicted the research facets of the Museum's work. Museum staff prepared a booklet for clubs and school in the district on how to set up an archive; they provided lectures to students in the Local History Records Management Course at the Edith Cowan University; and worked with the Heritage Committee to enable public access and tours to the Claremont Railway Signal Box. Under a schools program, the Museum also conducted a School/Work/Play program with Theatre Arts students from Curtin University for primary students and produced a local history package for secondary schools.

These examples illustrate some of the reasons why the Claremont Museum has earned a reputation as a progressive, innovative, and effective community museum that relates to, and interacts with, its community. Fortunately, there are an increasing number of museums around Australia which, like the Claremont Museum, are working at becoming more relevant to local interests.

#### LIVING HISTORY MUSEUM OF THE WEST, MELBOURNE

Aspects of this Museum have already been discussed in Chapter 3. However, its mission to



be a community museum goes beyond being a 'multi-cultural museum'. It thus lists, among its aims and objectives: the involvement of the people of the region in the collection, research and presentation of the history of the Western region; the recording of the history of the working people of the region to the present day; the creation of a mobile museum service; and the development and promotion of a community museum activity which is interactive and innovative. The Living Museum has also taken on the role of developing the concept of ecomuseums in Australia. By the early 1970s the western suburbs of Melbourne had come to be known as 'the deprived west'. Manufacturing was declining with the recession and changing patterns of trade, technology and job opportunities were emerging. However, with the support of Joan Kirner, and the new State Labor Government, there were moves to turn around this negative profile and the concept of a museum was seen as a positive way of achieving this. At the same time there was an upsurge of interest in social history and in history 'from below'. In the museum profession the concept of ecomuseums was topical and overseas models were being discussed.

Although the Living Museum boasts a small display and resource centre, it centres its activities on taking exhibitions out of the Museum and into public places; to producing books, reports, school kits, brochures, postcards, posters, diaries, calendars, theatre, newspaper articles, radio broadcasts, videos and live events; to setting up of 'history' trails in the immediate vicinity of the Museum and around various aspects of the region; and to making links with other groups, projects and institutions in the Western region.

Haffenden, in his history of the Museum has written that the general thrust of the Museum's work has been to focus on every day living, to 'become part of the dialogue and banter of every day life rather than be set apart as something separate', and to make the community itself the real site of museum work, in agreement with the principles of ecomuseums (Haffenden, 1994: 16).

In contrast to this positive view of the Museum, Chris Healy, who worked at the Museum in its early days, has also written about the Living Museum of the West. In attempting to open up the concept of 'community' in the context of the Museum and to expose some of the contradictions and problems, Healy has presented a more critical view of the Museum. Its origins he attributes less to some 'organic development' growing out of shared interests and out of at-

tempts to assert a local identity, and more to the cultural intervention of liberal reformist politics that prevailed in Victoria during the early 1970s as well as the availability of State and Commonwealth funding for projects that brought together history, celebration and nationing. The lack of expertise and professionalism of staff, Healy claims, were problematic, whilst the innovative approach so admired by Haffenden, he suggests may have been praiseworthy but in practice:

the results mirrored the worst features borrowed from museums and history: from museology an obsession with collection and preservation, and from history the empiricism of the historical fact. (Healy, 1991: 163).

Healy's most damning criticism is that the Museum has become an institution which has been 'rarely participatory and rarely co-operative' (Healey, 1991: 165). His critique of the Museum is part of a broader discussion of public history and its claims to speak for the people, but also represents the climate of doubt that exist in respect to ecomuseums in general, and the Living Museum of the West, in particular.

#### NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA

A model of partnership between a national body and regional museums has been established by the travelling exhibition, *Murray Darling Basin Exhibition*. The exhibition was mounted by the National Museum but incorporated local museums as participants. The purpose of the project was: to stimulate debate about cultural factors underpinning environmental problems in the Murray Darling Basin, to explore interactions between human and environmental histories of the basin, and to encourage local awareness of heritage values — to encourage awareness of history by 'reading the landscape we have created'. The exhibition visited around 20 towns in the basin in 1993-1994, and at each site the display was augmented with local material prepared by community groups, museums and historical societies. Displays covered employment, environmental degradation, loss of sense of community, inter-intra-state tensions and rivalries. A secondary aim of the project was to provide a model for future co-operative relations between major and local museums, and to assist local museums rekindle sense of community and local identity (Baker, 1991: 278-281).

#### GUIDE TO KEY SOURCES

BENNETT, Tony, 1989. Museums and public culture: History, theory and policy. This article explores the influences of principles of access

and participation on Australian museum policies over the last two decades and speculates on the effects that the origins and early history of the public museums have had on public culture.

COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM ASSOCIATIONS, 1991a. *Something for Everyone — Access to Museums*. The conference papers deal with various aspects of access (physical and intellectual) with key speakers addressing the notion of access for museums (Des Griffin), cultural diversity (Claudine Brown), defining limits to access (Robyn Lowe, J Specht, Chris Anderson and John Jessop), as well as a number of interesting papers covering access in local museums.

COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM ASSOCIATIONS, 1991b. *Australian Museums — Collecting and Presenting Australia*. The conference theme of Collections attracted a large number of speakers who covered many aspects of access, from collections themselves, changing perceptions about cultural heritage, cultural diversity, to what we collect and why. Sections dealt with national collections — defining them to determining criteria for collections — and papers highlighted selected case studies of Commonwealth museums. Papers on community museums came from Ann Villiers (Community needs and public programs), Carolyn MacLulich (Public programs at the Australian Museum), Viv Szekeres (Culture-specific museums), Ilma O'Brien (Partnership arrangements), Helen Light (Jewish Museum), Steve Hemming (Camp Coorong).

GALBRAITH, Madelaine, 1993. *Community access exhibition venue listing*. Results of a survey to ascertain the extent of community access galleries in museums and art galleries.

HAFFENDEN, Peter, 1994. 'Your History Mate. The Work of a Community Museum in Melbourne's Western Suburbs'. An in-depth history of the Museum to commemorate ten years of operations. Haffenden, who has had a close involvement with the museum since its inception and has co-ordinated exhibitions there, chronicles the origin, early development, underlying philosophies and current activities. He includes a useful chapter describing some of the ways in which this museum is organised, manages its human and financial resources, obtains funding, and interacts with local groups, individuals and business organisations.

HEALY, Chris, 1991. *Working for the Living Museum of the West*. Healy, who worked at the Museum in its early days, provides a critical analysis of the Museum as a cultural project.

KARP, Ivan & LAVINE, Steven D. (eds), 1991. *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*. A collection of essays from museum directors, art historians, anthropologists, folklorists and historians that address the politics of culture with key sections on culture and representation; art museums, national identity and the status of minority cultures; museum practices; festivals and 'other cultures' and museums.

KARP, Ivan, MULLEN KREAMER, C. & LAVINE, Steven D. (eds), 1992. *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture*. Contributors examine the interplay between museums, festivals, tourism and historic preservation, and the communities these museums represent and serve. Mindy Duitz writes on the Brooklyn Children's Museum and discusses the Museum's response to changing demographic patterns in its local community. Alicia M. Gonzalez and Edith A. Tonelli describe the CARA project as a model for community participation and evaluate its strengths and weaknesses, and Nancy J. Fuller looks at how the Ak-Chin Indian Community have used an ecomuseum project as a vehicle for community empowerment. George F. MacDonald writes on the Canadian Museum of Civilisation and describes how the Museum functions as an information resource to meet its mandate to serve multicultural, national and international audiences. Similarly, John Kuo Wei Tchen writes about his Chinatown History Museum as a dialogic museum which is reshaping the Museum's relationship with the communities it serves.

LUMLEY, Robert, 1988. *The Museum Time Machine: Putting Culture on Display*. A collection of essays on the role of museums today which address themes of nostalgia, museums in a changing world and sociology of the museum public.

MARGINSON, Greg, 1993. *Access — Can it lead to community control?* Marginson looks at how the theory of access impacts on the policies, exhibitions and collections of museum, and suggests a participation model to evaluate the effectiveness of access programs implemented by museums.

MUSEUM NATIONAL, 1993. *Access: Commitment or containment?* A round-table discussion of issues of access in Australian museums which focussed on the questions: How do we define community? What impact does the notion of access have on the institution and the community? Is the consequent relationship a genuine one reflecting commitment and empowerment, or does it represent containment of ideas and issues?

MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA INC., VICTORIAN BRANCH, 1991. *Museums Towards Tomorrow: Serving the Future Public*. Questions of access underlie the papers presented to this conference.

POSTMAN, Neil, 1990. *Museum as dialogue*. Postman argues that the good museum conducts timely arguments with society, directing the attention at what is difficult and even painful to contemplate, with the essence of a museum being its ability to present to its visitors alternative visions of culture. In this way museums have a critical role in keeping choice and critical dialogue alive in conducting an argument with its society.

POULOT, Dominique, 1994. *Identity as self discovery: The ecomuseum in France*. As a specialist on the history of museums and the invention of national heritage, Poulot questions the radical effects of the ecomuseum movement and the 'new museology'. He charts the emergence of the movement in France and the professional and political backgrounds that prompted the development of the movement and then used these new institutions to further the ideological interests of various museological, cultural and political programs.

THOMAS, Daniel, 1993. *Access — The many kinds in many minds*. This paper offers an overview of access as a facet of government cultural policies and covers various aspects of access, both physical and intellectual, with a final warning on excessive access or over-interpretation.

WEIL, Stephen E., 1990. 'Rethinking the Museum and other Meditations'. Weil examines the purposes of the museum in the late twentieth century and suggests that museums make visitors more central to their operations in order to better serve the larger society whilst also fulfilling professional aspirations and institutional missions. See also Weil, Stephen E., 1990. 'Rethinking the museum', in *Museum News*, March/April.

UNESCO, 1985. *Images of the Ecomuseum*. This was a special issue dedicated to the memory of Georges Henri Riviere, the French founder of ecomuseums. Contributors provide an overview of the ecomuseum and the 'new museology' with articles covering the French experience and spread of the concept to Canada, thence the development of various ecomuseums around the world in Sweden, Portugal, Venezuela, Africa, Brazil and the USA. Also included are details of the Declaration of Quebec.

VERGO, Peter, 1989. *The New Museology*. Essays by Charles Saumarez Smith, Ludmilla Jordanova, Paul Greenhalgh, Colin Sorensen, Nick Merriman, Stephen Bann, Phillip Wright, Norman Palmer and Peter Vergo on a range of topics associated with purposes of museums rather than methods and concerned with theoretical re-evaluation of museums.

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